THE EARLY WORKS OF

BENJAMIN WOOLFIELD MOUNTFORT

1850 - 1865

Ian James Lochhead

A thesis submitted in partial
fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in Art History, University of
Auckland, 1975.

B. Mountlort - Architect

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I must thank my supervisors, Mr Michael Dunn, who advised me during the initial stages of research, and Professor Anthony Green, whose criticisms of the text led to innumerable improvements. Mr John Stacpoole discussed Mountfort with me on several occasions, and helped in many other ways, while Peter Beaven's enthusiasm for Mountfort's buildings was a source of encouragement during the early stages of my research. The members of the Mountfort family gave enthusiastic assistance, and I would like to thank in particular, Miss Edna Morris of Eastbourne, Miss Janie Mountfort of Feilding, Mr H.V.Mountfort of Auckland and Mr A.Mountfort of Pukekohe. I am also grateful to Miss K.Hutton of Christchurch for allowing me to study her father's papers relating to Mountfort's plans and drawings. Dr J.Mordaunt Crook, Sir Nikolaus Pevsner and Canon Basil Clarke all responded to my requests for information, and Mr R.H. Harrison of the Ecclesiological Society, searched the Society's records to find a connection between the Ecclesiologists and the Canterbury Association. I also received assistance from Mr J.K.Collins, Mr John Hendry, Mr Paul Pascoe, Mr C.R.H.Taylor and Mr John Turner. The President of the Christchurch Club gave permission for me to view the interior of the Club, and Mr A.Burdekin guided me through the building.

At the Canterbury Museum I received every possible assistance from Dr Roger Duff, Mr John Wilson, Mrs Joan Woodward, and Richard Wolfe, who photographed many of Mountfort's plans in the Museum's collection. I am also grateful for the assistance I received from other institutions and libraries: the Alexander Turnbull Library,

the Auckland Institute and Museum, the Auckland Public Library, the Auckland Diocesan Office, the Christchurch Diocesan Office, the Canterbury Public Library, the Canterbury University Library, the Hawke's Bay Art Gallery and Museum, the Hocken Library, the National Archives, the R.I.B.A. Library and the University of Auckland Architecture School Library.

Grants from the New Zealand Historic Places Trust, the Canterbury Branch of the Historic Places Trust and the Canterbury Branch of the New Zealand Institute of Architects, assisted with the cost of travel and photography. Most of the photographs, including those used as illustrations, were processed by the Auckland University Photographic Department. Thanks are also due to Mrs Mary Ogle, who typed the text.

Finally, I must thank my parents for their interest and support, and Lynnette Taylor, who patiently listed to, and criticised my ideas about Benjamin Mountfort.

ABSTRACT

This study of the early work of Benjamin Mountfort is concerned with establishing the facts relating to Mountfort's career as an architect, and with analysing the buildings which he designed during his first fifteen years in New Zealand. The main source of information has been documentary material relating to Mountfort's buildings and to his views on architecture. The buildings themselves and Mountfort's plans and drawings form the other major source. The first two chapters deal with Mountfort's life and architectural principles. They contain discussion of his early training and influences; his reasons for emigrating to New Zealand and his subsequent activities in this country; his knowledge of the architectural theory of the Gothic Revival; his interest in medieval history and the social and religious reforms of the 19th century. The next three chapters deal with the buildings and explore the relationship of his church designs to the ideas of the Ecclesiologists; the expression of natural forces and forms in the structure and composition of his buildings; their reaction against classical notions of symmetry, proportion and beauty; the influence of the ideas of Pugin, Ruskin and Downing; and the development of a new approach to domestic design which foreshadows the English "Domestic Revival". The analysis of the buildings also deals with his use of local materials and his adaptation of forms derived from English architecture to New Zealand conditions. Mountfort emerges as an individual and original architect whose works were influenced by his religious views and his Romantic response to nature, and who established in New Zealand the architectural forms and ethical principles of the High Victorian Movement.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Unless otherwise indicated, all works are by Benjamin Mountfort.

All drawings unless otherwise indicated are by Benjamin Mountfort.

Dimensions are in inches, height before width.

11. St Bartholomew's Church, interior of nave, looking west. Photo, author.

12. St Micheal's Church, Christchurch, bell tower, perspective view, 1861, pen and ink, wash, 14 x 10 . St Micheal's Church.

13. St Mary's Church, Halswell, north-west view, 1863. Photo, A.C.Barker, Canterbury Museum.

14. Provincial Council Buildings. Christchurch, perspective drawing, 1855. From C.R.H.Taylor, 'The Gothic Beauties and History of the Canterbury Provincial Buildings.'

15. Town Hall, Christchurch, interior view looking south, 1857, pencil, $9\frac{1}{4}$ x 7-3/8. Christchurch City Council, City Architect's Office.

16. Provincial Council Buildings, perspective drawing, c.1857. Photo, A.C.Barker, Canterbury Museum.

17. Provincial Council Buildings, south west view, 1859 section (left), 1858 section (centre), 1865 section (right). Photo, Auckland Institute and Museum.

18. Provincial Council Buildings, wooden council chamber and corridor from the north, 1858. Photo, author.

19. Provincial Council Buildings, wooden council chamber from the south, 1858. Photo, author.

20. Provincial Council Buildings, wooden council chamber, interior looking east. Photo, Alexander Turnbull Library.

21. Provincial Council Buildings, north front, 1859. Photo, A.C.Barker, Canterbury Museum.

22. Provincial Council Buildings, council chamber (left) and refreshment rooms, from the east, 1865. Photo, Alexander Turnbull Library.

23. Provincial Council Buildings, refreshment rooms, south elevation, pen and ink, 19 x 28-7/8. Canterbury Museum.

24. Provincial Council Buildings, refreshment rooms, west and north elevations, pen and ink, 29 x 19. Canterbury Museum.

25. Provincial Council Buildings, stone council chamber, interior looking west. Photo, A.C.Barker, Canterbury Museum.

26. Bishopscourt, Christchurch, first design, elevations, 1857, pencil and wash, 20-7/8 x 25-7/8. Christchurch Diocesan Office.

27. Bishopscourt, first design, plan, pencil and wash, 12-5/8 x 21. Christchurch Diocesan Office.

28. Bishopscourt, second design, 1857. Photo, A.C. Barker, John Turner Collection.

29. Union Bank of Australia, Lyttelton, east front of manager's residence. c.1857. Photo, Paul Pascoe.

30. Christchurch Club, Christchurch, perspective drawing, 1859, pencil, 9-3/4 diameter. Christchurch Club.

31. A.J.Downing, design for a villa in the Italian style, 1850. From, "The Architecture of Country Houses."

32. Christchurch Club, Worcester Street front. Photo, author.

33. Benjamin Mountfort House, c.1860. Photo, Canterbury Museum.

Note: Bracketed references in the left hand margin of the text are to the illustrations.

BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

Benjamin Woolfield Mountfort was born in Wolverhampton, near Birmingham, on 13 March, 1825. His father, Thomas Mountfort, married Susanna Wale Woolfield and Benjamin was their eldest son. A second son, Charles, was born in 1826, and a daughter Susanna was born in 1828. The Mountfort family had lived at Walsall, near Birmingham at least since the 17th century. At that time they owned property in the area and held the status of yeomen. Benjamin Mountfort claimed that his family was descended from Hugh de Montfort who came to England with the Norman Conquerors bringing with him fifty ships and sixty men of arms.[1] However, there is no evidence to confirm a link between the Mountforts of Walsall and Hugh de Montfort.

The young Benjamin Mountfort grew up at the time when the Gothic Revival was being established as the dominant architectural movement in England. He was over ten years younger than A.W.Pugin, Butterfield, or Gilbert Scott and by the time he reached manhood the Gothic revival was firmly established. He was about the same age as George Edmund Street, and like Street, Mountfort received his architectural training in the office of an architect already committed to the Gothic revival.

Very little is known of Mountfort's early life. There is no contemporary biographical account and no family records have survived. Mountfort's library, which was evidently large and

---

1. C.L.Mountfort, The House of Mountfort, n.d. p.4.

contained books dating from the 17th century as well as works on history and architecture, has been dispersed and only a few volumes have been traced. The earliest biographical account is the brief obituary which appeared in the Lyttelton Times.[2] The only other account which may be based on first hand information was written by Samuel Hurst Seager,[3] an architect who worked in Christchurch during Mountfort's lifetime and who almost certainly knew him.

According to Seager, Mountfort was articled to Richard Cromwell Carpenter in 1844[4] and he probably studied with Carpenter until 1848. The choice of Carpenter was significant, for along with William Butterfield, he was the most favoured architect of the Cambridge Camden Society. We do not know whether Mountfort chose to study with Carpenter because he shared Mountfort's Anglican High Church principles, or whether Carpenter's beliefs influenced the young Mountfort. Whatever the case Mountfort was familiar with the ideas of the High Church Party and of the Ecclesiologists from the very beginning of his architectural career. Carpenter was praised by Eastlake for the "careful and scholarlike treatment" of his buildings and no other architect of his day "understood so thoroughly....the grammar of his art".[5] Mountfort would have gained a thorough knowledge of the elements of Gothic architecture while working in Carpenter's office, as well as an appreciation of the scholarly and archeological aspects of the

---

2. Lyttelton Times 17 March, 1898

3. S.Hurst Seager "Provincial Council Buildings No 2; The Architect, His Environment and his Works." The City Beautiful, 10 March, 1926, pp.10-16.

4. Ibid, p.13.

5. Eastlake C.L. A History of the Gothic Revival, London, 1872, p.222.

Revival. Carpenter died prematurely in 1855 and the Ecclesiologist described him in an obituary as an architect who "never seemed to dream of producing a sudden or startling effect, and yet his works all tell, and are all eminently original and varied and peculiarly devoid of mannerism. His success lay in the perfect keeping of everything he did - the harmony of parts and general unity of proportion running through the entire building."[6] Hitchcock described Carpenter as one of the less inspired architects of his generation, but whatever Carpenter's individual merits as an architect, Mountfort would have certainly gained from him a solid grounding in his art.

It has been asserted that Mountfort studied with Sir Gilbert Scott[7] but there is no evidence to support this statement. This misconception was probably derived from accounts given by members of the Mountfort family which have been perpetuated up to the present time. The first connection between Mountfort and Scott about which there is any evidence, occurred in 1863. In that year, Mountfort and his partner, Isaac Luck attempted to secure the position of supervising architects for the construction of Christchurch Cathedral which Scott had designed. In a letter to the Secretary of the Cathedral Commission dated January 10th, 1863, the architects stated:

---

6. Quoted in Clarke, B.F.L., Church Builders of the Nineteenth Century, London, 1938 , p.112.

7. McLintock, A.H., ed., The Encyclopedia of New Zealand, Wellington, 1966, and Scholfield, G.H., ed., A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Wellington, 1940.

> "Mr Mountfort is not unknown to Mr Scott as he has been in communication on this subject (i.e. the building of Christchurch Cathedral) with several members of the Institute of British Architects who from their personal knowledge of him can vouch to Mr Scott for his professional abilities..."[8]

Had Mountfort trained with Scott, even for a short time, it would have been unnecessary to engage friends in England to assure Scott of his professional competence. Also, had Mountfort trained with Scott it would have been an obvious point in his favour, but in the protracted discussions over the appointment of the supervising architect, and during the newspaper debate that followed, such a reason in his favour was never mentioned. One can only conclude that Mountfort did not train with Scott. The later error was probably the result of the association of Mountfort's name with Scott's after Mountfort was appointed supervising architect for the Cathedral in 1873.

While Mountfort was working with Carpenter in London, he became a member of a London Architectural Society. Very little is known of the Society except that it operated from about 1842 until at least 1847. The Royal Institute of British Architects Library contains four volumes of essays written by members of the Society. These include a paper by Mountfort entitled "Remarks Descriptive of Ecclesiastical Edifices in Northhamptonshire"[9] and also several essays by Arthur and Raphael Brandon. In fact the sudden demise of the Society after 1847 may have been in part the result of Arthur Brandon's sudden death in December 1847.

---

8. Letter in Christchurch Dioscesan Office; Cathedral Commission Correspondence.

9. R.I.B.A.Library, Essays of London Architectural Soceity, Vol. 2 M.s. pp.74-78.

The Brandon brothers' research into medieval English architecture was of considerable importance in the development of the later phase of the Gothic revival as they helped to provide a much sounder archeological basis for the understanding of Gothic forms than was available previously. Their published works, An Analysis of Gothic Architecture (1847) Parish Churches; being Perspective Views of English Ecclesiastial Structures (1848) and Open Timber Roofs of the Middle Ages (1849) remain among the major accounts of English Gothic.[10] The papers they read before the society covered a similar range of topics and included "Remarks on Ancient Ecclesiastical Architecture of England" (Vol II) "On the Construction of Tracery of Gothic Windows" (Vol I) and "On the most appropriate style for Church Architecture in England (Vol III). Other essays ranged from studies of early German architecture to technical subjects such as scaffolding and the art of brickmaking. As a member of the Society Mountfort was in touch with current research and ideas on medieval architecture as well as with the most recent technical knowledge available.

At some time during the 1840s, Mountfort must have come in contact with the work and writings of Pugin. Pugin's books on architecture appeared during the fortys and St Chad's, Birmingham, within easy reach of Mountfort's native Wolverhampton, was completed in 1841. Mountfort even owned a drawing by Pugin but this is now lost.[11] Richard Carpenter himself, was a friend of Pugin's, and

---

10. Stanton, P., The Gothic Revival and American Church Architecture, Baltimore, 1968, p.42.

11. A drawing by Pugin which Mountfort owned was presented to the Canterbury Branch of the N.Z.I.A. in 1941. Its present whereabouts is unknown.

it was Pugin who had introduced him to the Ecclesiological Society in 1841.[12] The influence of Pugin emerges clearly in Mountfort's own writing on architecture.

Mountfort's architectural education was also broadened by travel on the continent in the years before he emigrated to New Zealand. It is not clear where he went but from the evidence of his subsequent writings it seems probable that he travelled in France, Germany and the Low Countries, where he visited many of the most important examples of Gothic architecture. It is significant as far as his later work is concerned that he does not seem to have visited Italy. We do know that he spent some time in Cannes where he stayed with his uncle, Thomas Woolfield. Woolfield was a man of some means and a long standing member of the English colony in Cannes. He also had a taste for Gothic architecture and in 1855 he commissioned the architects Smith and Son of London, to design a church there. This was enlarged in 1866.[13] It has been suggested that the English Church in Cannes was designed by Mountfort, but this is clearly not the case.

Little more is known of Mountfort's life before he came to New Zealand. Seager states that "in 1848 he was preparing excellent designs for church work in England"[14] but so far no evidence of any work executed by Mountfort before he left England has been

---

12. Eastlake, p.223.

13. See J.M., Thomas Robinson Woolfield's Life at Cannes and Lord Brougham's First Arrival, London, 1890 and The Illustrated London News, 2 February 1867, p.11.

14. Seager, p.13.

found. Seager's statement may be based on an elevation for a church in London, signed by Mountfort and dated 1848. This drawing was among those in Mountfort's office on his death. These drawings have been dispersed and it is not clear whether the drawing is an original design or a measured drawing. Whatever the case, there would have been little enough time for him to execute much work before he departed for New Zealand in September, 1850.

A number of factors must have influenced Mountfort in his decision to emigrate to New Zealand. He probably showed the feelings of dissatisfaction and unease with the present state of English society which prompted many emigrants to seek fresh opportunities in the colonies. We know that he distrusted the democratic reforms of the 19th century political life and these fears were probably confirmed when he learnt of his brother's experiences in Paris during the Revolution of 1848.[15] There were other reasons, however, directly related to his profession of architecture. While he worked in Carpenter's office he must have become aware of the programme of Anglican church building that was being carried out all over the world. Carpenter himself supplied designs for cathedrals in Ceylon and Jamaica, for the church of St Mark in Philadelphia, for churches in Tasmania and for a wooden church in Tristan d'Acunha.[16] Mountfort was therefore aware of the opportunities available for an architect with his

---

15. C.L.Mountfort, p.7.

16. I am grateful to Dr J.Mordaunt Crook for information on Carpenter's designs for churches outside the British Isles.

training and tastes in a colony such as New Zealand, He was probably also aware of the advantages which knowledge of local conditions and materials would provide. Furthermore, the Canterbury settlement in which Mountfort intended to settle was no ordinary colonising venture. From the first it had been organised as a Church colony and the man largely responsible for its organisation, John Robert Godley, was known for his high church sympathies. If Mountfort was considering the possibility of emigration, this was the logical place for him to go. Mountfort may have been approached by members of the Canterbury Association, who realised the necessity of sending out an architect well versed in ecclesiology. There is no evidence to confirm this but several members of the Canterbury Association were also members of the Ecclesiological Society.[17]

Mountfort had accumulated some means before his departure from England as he is listed as one of the purchasers of land in the Canterbury settlement,[18] and both he and his brother, their wives and unmarried sister were among the chief cabin passengers aboard the 'Charlotte Jane', the ship that carried them to New Zealand. The three month voyage began from Plymouth on 17 September and ended at Lyttelton on 16 December , the 'Charlotte Jane' being the first of the first four ships to arrive. An account of voyage was written by one of the passengers, Edward Ward,[19] and it gives the first and one of the few personal glimpses of Mountfort that are recorded. Although initially succumbing to sea-sickness,

---

17. See Chapter 2, pp. 28,29.

18. Canterbury Papers, p.225. He gave his address as 2 Earl Street, Westminster.

19. The Journal of Edward Ward, Christchurch, 1951.

Mountfort recovered sufficiently by September 30th to have an article on "Colonial Buildings" appear in the ship's newspaper, The Cockroach [20]. The editor was James Edward Fitzgerald who later became editor of the Lyttelton Times and then of The Press. Fitzgerald and Mountfort shared an interest in history and architecture. Fitzgerald had worked until recently in the Antiquities Room of the British Museum and was an amateur architect of some ability. As editor of The Press Fitzgerald gave Mountfort and his works strong support often in the face of indifference or hostility. Fitzgerald also became the first Superintendent of the Province of Canterbury, and it was probably as a result of this that Mountfort gained the patronage of the Provincial Government.

The first year in Canterbury provided few opportunities for Mountfort to practice his profession, as the most essential task was to provide temporary accommodation until more permanent buildings could be erected. Nevertheless, in little over a year since the first settlers arrived, the foundation stone of Mountfort's first church designed in New Zealand, was laid on 24 April 1852. The church was Holy Trinity, Lyttelton, and Mountfort prepared a perspective drawing which he intended to be published as a print. The drawing is inscribed to John Robert Godley, who laid the foundation stone, but there is no record of the print being published. The church had a high nave with aisles on either side and a tower at the east end. However, when the church was opened on January 6th, 1853[21] only the four bays at the

---

20. Ibid., p.38.

21. Lyttelton Times, 8 January 1853.

west end of the nave had been built. It was constructed on the brick noggin principle (i.e. timber framing with brick infill) but within little more than a year the building was showing serious signs of weakness. The brick noggings had become loosened as a result of the shrinkage of the timber framing and the vibration of the building in high winds.[22] Mountfort, in conjunction with Edward Dobson, the Provincial Engineer, and H.I.Cridland, prepared a report which gave recommendations for the repair of the church, but a few weeks later a public meeting decided that the best course of action was to demolish the church.[23]

The failure of Holy Trinity Church was a disastrous beginning for Mountfort's career in the Canterbury settlement. The failure of the building was the result of Mountfort's lack of knowledge of local conditions, and should not be attributed to a lack of structural knowledge. However, in the eyes of the public it placed Mountfort's professional competence in serious doubt, and it was raised as an objection to his work over ten years later.

During the next few years Mountfort was involved in a variety of occupations in addition to his work as an architect, and it has been suggested that this was a consequence of the failure of Holy Trinity. In 1855 he was listed as a resident in London Street, Lyttelton,[24] then in 1856 he opened a book and stationary shop and was agent for the Lyttelton Times.[25] By 1857 he had

---

22. Ibid., 7 April 1854.

23. Ibid., 15 April 1854.

24. Canterbury Provincial Gazette, V.2., 1855.

25. Lyttelton Times, 20 February, 1856.

moved to Christchurch[26] and in the same year he was working as a portrait photographer. C.O.Torlesse noted in his Journal on 27 March 1857, "Got my likeness taken at Mountfort's"[27]. It was at this time that Mountfort taught Dr A.C.Barker the art of photography. One of Barker's children recorded that during the Doctor's convalescence after a fall from his horse in 1855, Mountfort gave him lessons in photography.[28] Barker eventually gave up his practice as a result of his injury and photography became a full time occupation. He more than repaid his debt to Mountfort, for his photographs are the finest record we have of the original appearance of many of Mountfort's buildings. Also during these years Mountfort held appointments as a drawing master, at Lyttelton Grammar School from August 1856 and at Christ's College in 1859.[29]

Although Mountfort was not devoting all his time to architecture at this stage he still executed a considerable amount of architectural work in the years following the demolition of Holy Trinity, Lyttelton. As early as 1855 he had produced the first of a series of designs for the Canterbury Provincial Council Buildings. A drawing, dated 1855 was approved by Fitzgerald, the Provincial Superintendent, on 10 March of that year. Although construction did not begin until 1858, Mountfort was clearly assured of the commission from an early date. In 1857 a town hall was

---

26. Canterbury Provincial Gazette, 1857.

27. Torlesse Journal, 24 March 1857, Canterbury Museum Library.

28. "Memorials of a Photographer in the Fifties", Weekly Press, Jubilee No., Christchurch.

29. McDonald, G., Dictionary of Canterbury Biography, B.W.Mountfort p.7. Card Index, Canterbury Museum Library.

built to Mountfort's design and the stone Union Bank of Australia in Lyttelton was built in the same year. However, more important than the designing of individual buildings was the appointment of Mountfort and his partner Isaac Luck as Provincial Architects. In a letter to the Superintendent of Canterbury dated June 12, 1857, Mountfort and Luck set out an initial statement of conditions of appointment, and Mountfort agreed to the termination of his existing contract.[30] Mountfort had probably been employed by the Provincial Government since 1855 when he produced his first design for the Government buildings. The appointment guaranteed the architects a wide range of design and supervisory work, much of it routine and prosaic in nature, but carrying with it the prestigous commission for the design of the Provincial Council Buildings, which was the only major building enterprise in the early years of the colony. After 1859 there is no record of Mountfort undertaking any work outside his architectural practice, and it seems probably that it was necessary for him to seek alternative means of earning a living in the early years of the settlement simply because there was very limited scope for architectural work at that time. Mountfort also designed several churches in the years immediately following the demolition of Holy Trinity, including St Bartholomew's, Kaiapoi, in 1855. Although the failure of Holy Trinity damaged Mountfort's reputation, it seems to have had no major effect on his subsequent work.

The formation of the partnership with Isaac Luck in 1857

---

30. Letter to Superintendent, 12 June 1857, No.586, Canterbury Museum Library.

probably indicated an upturn in Mountfort's work. Luck had trained as an architect and arrived in Canterbury in 1857. He married Mountfort's sister, Susanna, in 1853.[31] Luck's contribution to the partnership was primarily of a practical and commercial nature. Evidence of Luck's practical abilities is found in a letter to the Superintendent in which the architects contracted to supply a press for the Provincial Secretary's Office in May 1857. The press was to be built by Luck from Mountfort's design.[32] His commercial abilities are suggested by the fact that when the partnership was dissolved in July 1864, Luck immediately went into partnership with an auctioneer.[33] Mountfort, on the other hand, immediately formed a new partnership with the architect Maxwell Bury, who had recently arrived in Christchurch from Nelson where he had designed the Nelson Provincial Government Buildings. The partnership with Bury was short lived and not very productive. The only work produced under the name of the partnership was the design for St John's Church, Latimer Square and an unexecuted design for a supreme court. The plans for St John's are signed by Bury and dated 1864 and as the foundation stone was laid on 24 June 1864, the church must have been designed before the formation of the partnership. The plan for the supreme court, although signed by both architects is probably Bury's work also, as both the style of the building and the draughting style are dissimilar to Mountfort's work. The drawing is dated July 1864

---

31. McDonald, p.7.

32. Letter to the Superintendent, 7 May 1857, no.934, Canterbury Museum Library.

33. The Press, 7 July 1864.

and must have been produced in the early days of the partnership. Mountfort was engaged on the plans for the stone extensions to the Provincial Council Buildings from April 1864 and was involved in supervising this work until the end of 1865. Consequently little other work of any importance was undertaken during this period. A further reference to the partnership occurred in 1865 when Mountfort and Bury shared the premium for the designs for the Canterbury Museum with Robert Speechly.[34] However from the mid-sixties until the early seventies the Province suffered an economic recession which resulted in reduced building activity. Possibly as a result of this recession, Bury sailed for London in March 1866.[35] For the rest of his career, Mountfort worked on his own, although from the 1880s on he received some assistance from his son Cyril, who continued the practice after his father's death.

The recovery of the Canterbury economy in the early 'seventies resulted in renewed building activity and a considerable expansion of Mountfort's practice. Work had begun on the first part of the Canterbury Museum in 1869 and in 1871 the rebuilding of Sunnyside Lunatic Asylum was begun to Mountfort's design. By 1877 two further portions of the Museum and the first of the Canterbury College buildings were completed. The termination of the period of Provincial Government in 1876 concluded one phase of Mountfort's

---

34. von Haast, H.I., Life and Times of Sir Julien von Haast, Wellington, 1948, p.431

35. Lyttelton Times, 9 March 1866.

career, although his appointment as Provincial Architect had already been modified in 1862 to that of "Consulting Architects to the Province".[36] Nevertheless, he continued as the architect for Sunnyside Lunatic Asylum and as architect for Canterbury College. The loss of the Provincial Government work was more than recompensed by a dramatic increase in church commissions in the early seventies. Mountfort had been unsuccessful in his bid to obtain the position of supervising architect for Christchurch Cathedral in 1863, but the initial stages of construction progressed only as far as the foundations before the recession of the sixties brought work to a halt. When it was decided to resume construction in 1873 the Cathedral Commission's attitude towards Mountfort had changed and he was appointed supervising architect.[37] Since 1853 he had designed only about six churches which were built, but between 1872 and 1880 over twenty churches were built from Mountfort's designs. Admittedly many were small country churches in wood, and similar in design.

Eighteen seventy-two saw the foundation of a professional association of architects in Canterbury. The Canterbury Association of Architects was the first organisation of its kind in New Zealand and its formation may well have resulted from Mountfort's influence as he was the first president and the first member to sign the "Scale of Charges".[38] The other members

---

36. Letter to Superintendent of Canterbury, 3 October 1862, No.1529, Canterbury Museum Library.

37. Christchurch Cathedral Commission, Minute Book No.2 1871 - 1879 August 28 1873, Christchurch Dioscesan Office.

38. 'Early History of the Canterbury Branch' Journal of Proceedings, N.Z.I.A. April 1912 V.7,No.7. p.47., and J.K. Collins, A Century of Architecture' Christchurch, 1965 pl.II.

included Alexander Lean, Charles Fooks, Frederick Strouts and W.B.Armson, and the Association continued actively until at least 1880.

There was no decrease in Mountfort's work during the following decade. In 1883 one of his major works, the Canterbury College Hall, was opened. Also in this year he was able to make the return voyage to England, largely, it seems, in order to pursue his antiquarian interests in family history. He was back in New Zealand by 1884 and in the following years designed several of his most important churches, including Napier Cathedral and St Mary's Parnell. By this time his position as one of the countries leading architects was assured and this was confirmed by his appointment to the Commission of Inquiry into the Condition of the Seacliff Lunatic Asylum buildings in 1888.[39] R.A.Lawson's building had subsided and developed serious structural weaknesses and it must have given Mountfort some satisfaction to know that his own ability to design structurally sound buildings was no longer in question.

During the last decade of his life the volume of Mountfort's work decreased although there was no diminution in the quality of his work. Mountfort was a member of the Canterbury Society of Arts since its inception in 1880 and when the Society decided to build a gallery in 1890, he was asked to prepare a design. Because the Society was short of funds, Mountfort agreed to redesign his original stone proposal in brick, as well as waiving his fee and

---

39. Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1888, Section H - 7.

supervising the construction of the building without payment.[40] Several long standing projects were completed during the 1890s. The last section of Sunnyside Hospital was completed in 1893, and his final building for Canterbury College, the Biological Laboratory, was built in 1895-96. Among his last works was the design for the west end of St Mary's Parnell in 1894, but the building was not completed until after his death.

These final years were increasingly given over to his research into the Mountfort family history, which was left incomplete on his death. It was probably during these years that he was remembered by Selwyn Bruce as "patriarchal old Mountfort, the Cathedral Architect with snow white long hair and beard, who when walking gave one the impression that he was tallying the number of yards from his home to his office."[41] A description given in 1929 records that he was short in stature, "of a most lovable and genial disposition, but essentially a student, a recluse; his one interest was architecture with its associate (sic) studies of heraldry, history and art in which he was completely wrapped...(he) was quietly spoken, unassuming, almost taciturn, yet of a winning eager manner when his interest was aroused."[42] Dr Barker's portrait photograph of Mountfort, probably taken during the 1860s, tends to confirm this description.

Benjamin Mountfort died on 15 March 1898, at the beginning

---

40. Canterbury Society of Arts, Minute Books, 1880-91.

41. A.Selwyn Bruce, The Early Days of Canterbury, Christchurch, 1932, p.142.

42. C.R.H.Taylor, Gothic Beauties and History of the Canterbury Buildings, Christchurch, 1929, pp.50-51.

of his seventy-fourth year. He was, as the obituary in the Lyttelton Times noted, one of the few original Canterbury pilgrims still left.[43] The obituary observed that he had taken little part in public affairs but had devoted himself to his profession of architecture. The writer recognised the role Mountfort had played in designing "Most of the churches and many of the public buildings in and around Christchurch." Indeed, these buildings more than any others had helped to establish the architectural character of Christchurch during the 19th century. Mountfort's service to the Church of England was also recognised. He had been one of the earliest members of the Dioscesan Synod and "ever displayed great energy in connection with the affairs of the Church...." He was buried in the churchyard of Holy Trinity Avonside where he had once served as a vestryman. His grave lies only a few yards away from the chancel and transepts of the church which he had designed over twenty years before.

---

43. Lyttelton Times, 17 March 1898.

Chapter Two

MOUNTFORT'S ARCHITECTURAL PRINCIPLES

Mountfort never attempted to write a systematic statement of his ideas about the nature of architecture. In order to reconstruct his views it is necessary to piece them together from a series of documents all written for other purposes. The most valuable of these documents is a letter from Mountfort and Luck written to the Colonial Secretary on 7 June 1857.[1] The purpose of the letter was to defend Mountfort's design for a new Government House in Auckland. In the course of his defence, Mountfort gave the fullest statement of his architectural principles that is known.

Apart from this document, there are three other pieces of writing from Mountfort's hand which deal with topics related to architecture. Two of these are the texts of papers read before the Cathedral Guild in Christchurch. The earlier paper, Some Old Precedents for Modern Church Building dates from 1878. It is largely devoted to descriptions of the gifts to churches, recorded in medieval inscriptions. Mountfort holds up the generosity of the medieval donors as an example to the present. The paper concludes with an unidentified quotation dating from 1844 which praises the spirit of self sacrifice in the Middle Ages, and which looks forward to the similar sentiments expressed by Ruskin in the Seven Lamps of Architecture.[2] The message of Mountfort's paper

---

1. Colonial Secretary's Letterbook, No.60/1708, National Archives, Wellington.

2. John Ruskin, Seven Lamps of Architecture, Chapter 1.

cannot have been lost on his audience who were involved with the building of Christchurch Cathedral. The second paper, Other Times was read in 1885 and is essentially a brief discussion of the social life of England in the 14th century, based on the writings of Langland and Chaucer. The essay is noteable for its sympathetic yet unidealised view of the period. Mountfort was well aware that daily life could often be harsh and brutal, and that the church was often worldly and corrupt, but he was also aware that the common man often enjoyed 'a great deal of rude material prosperity' and that the church was a vital spiritual force in society.[3] During the last twenty years of his life, Mountfort devoted a good deal of his time to the research and writing of a history of the Mountfort family.[4] The 'History' recounts the fortunes of the family from the 10th century in France to the early 16th century in England but it is of value in the present context primarily for the light it throws on Mountfort's view of history.

The study of history, and in particular medieval history, was one of the dominant interests in Mountfort's life. His fascination with the life of medieval England is apparent in his earliest piece of writing, the "Remarks descriptive of Ecclesiastical Edifices in Northamptonshire".[5] He describes the medieval buildings of a small corner of Northamptonshire with loving attention to details, and regrets the modern "improvements" which

---

3. B.W.Mountfort, Other Times, Christchurch, 1885, pp.2-3.

4. The m.s.History and a typewritten transcript are in the possession of Mr H.V.Mountfort of Auckland.

5. Essays of London Architectural Society, V.2, pp.74-78.

have destroyed some of these monuments. The history of the Mountfort family also dwells on the medieval period, digressing to include details of medieval life and customs. And there are Mountfort's buildings themselves, which draw their formal vocabulary from Gothic models.

Mountfort's fascination with history is characteristic of the romantic movement as a whole. The dramatic social changes which had occurred in the wake of the Industrial Revolution caused men to look back to a ruder, simpler, less complicated age for guidance and reassurance. The imaginative recreation of the past, of which the taste for Gothic architecture and 'historical' novels were only two manifestations, also provided a means of escape from the harsh realities of life in industrial England. Because he was also a Victorian, Mountfort tended to see history in moral and didactic terms. He believed that the love for and study of history could have "a wholesome and elevating effect" upon the life of a country. He also quoted Macaulay's belief that a people that took no pride in the achievements of the past would achieve nothing worth remembering in the future.[6] Furthermore, without a sense of history a people becomes rootless and disorientated, a situation which Camden described as being like "strangers in their own soil; and for-rainers (sic) in their own city".[7] This must have been the feeling of many men at the end of the century of change between 1750 and 1850 which transformed England from an agrarian society into a modern industrial nation. In fact the break with the past was seen as one of the reasons

---

6. Notes on the History of the Mountfort family, p.2.

7. Quoted by Mountfort, ibid., p.4.

for the evils of the present.

Mountfort was acutely aware of the need to create a spiritual continuity between the past, the present and the future, and it was this conviction that led him to devote so much time to his family history. It was written so that "those who follow us may have some acquaintance with their origin and history and may be able to look a little further back than 1850 when their grandsires landed at Lyttelton, New Zealand..."[8]

In a new country such as New Zealand the break with the past had occurred both in time and space, for the European settlers were physically remote from the sources of their history. The lack of a history and tradition created a spiritual and imaginative impoverishment, a lack of associations and of precedents. This fact must have been brought home to Mountfort after his visit to England in 1883, and in his writing of 1885 one can sense his acute feeling of loss:

> It is a great drawback on our colonial life that the land in which we live has for us no history, no appeals from the past in names, customs or monuments; no records of struggles, disappointments or triumphs; no mute but eloquent witnesses confront us to bear testimony to the stiring deeds of other times...[9]

As a result of the lack of a sense of the past in a colonial environment it was easy for a superficial view of life to develop dominated by the needs and desires of the present.

---

8. Ibid., p.1.

9. Other Times, p.1.

> "In an old country..." on the other hand, "the most careless observer cannot escape from feeling that he is surrounded by other influences than those of the present, that the places in which he lives and moves have seen other times, that daily life was not always carried on upon the same lines that it now is, and that we ourselves or our own personal wishes are not the only objects in the world.

The sense of a spiritual union with the men of past ages which Mountfort alludes to can only be developed in New Zealand if settlers look back to the history of their country of origin. "We have still our inheritance in the past of England's life and history," wrote Mountfort, "and though the most distant fragment of our Mother country, yet to us also belong all the mighty memories of the far off land, and its heroic chronicles."

As a young man, in 1850, the advantages of colonial life must have been uppermost in Mountfort's mind. The romantic notion of escape was probably a strong influence. By coming to a new country it was possible to make a break with the forms and ideas of the immediate past and to escape from the social evils of the old world. Mountfort may even have seen himself as a 19th century counterpart of his ancestor, Hugh de Montfort, bringing to New Zealand a vision of a new society based on the best aspects of medieval society. And just as the Normans brought their native architecture to England, so too did Mountfort bring his native architecture to New Zealand.

Mountfort believed that English history and traditions had a part to play in New Zealand, and therefore it was natural that

he should want to introduce English architecture to New Zealand. "It is the endeavour of Englishmen when founding a colony to introduce all the sciences, arts, laws and time honoured institutions of their native land" argued Mountfort, and therefore it seemed "natural that their native historical architecture should have a prominent place accorded to it...." The "native historical architecture" was, of course, the Gothic style, which he considered much more suitable than classical "which has no claims to our regard on the score of association with our history."[10] The Gothic style was to be reproduced faithfully but at the same time he considered it appropriate to adapt the style to suit the climate of the new country. Mountfort also mentioned the rebuilding of the Palace of Westminster as an example of the revival of the Gothic style. The example he chose was appropriate for the decision to rebuild the Houses of Parliament in Gothic had received considerable publicity and it established it as the national style of England. From this time on, the belief that Gothic was the only true English style became one of the strongest arguments in favour of the Gothic revival.[11] The introduction of Gothic architecture into New Zealand made it possible to re-affirm the strong connections between Mother country and colony. The presence of buildings in the Gothic style would also act as a reminder of ties of blood and country "and so postpone so far as possible that day when perhaps the exigency of political combinations may require that New Zealand shall not form part of the British Empire."[12]

---

10. Mountfort and Luck to the Colonial Secretary, p.1.

11. For a succinct account of the "nationalistic argument" see P.Collins, Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture, London, 1965, pp.100-105.

12. Other Times, p.2.

Mountfort and his contemporaries, did not want to revive the Gothic style merely for historical and nationalistic reasons. More important were the arguments which linked the revival of Gothic architecture with the desire for religious and social reform. Mountfort's admiration of medieval society implied a criticism of 19th century society. He had a deep distruct of the democratic trends of modern society and believed that "democracy carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction."[13] What was required was a more decisive exercise of political authority by those in power. In his religious beliefs Mountfort adopted a similar position. He was a member of the High Church party within the Anglican Church and was regarded as the most prominent lay member of that party in early Canterbury.[14] As a High Churchman he was concerned with the reform of the church and with the re-assertion of its lost spiritual authority. Mountfort, like many of his more famous contemporaries, wanted to reform modern society by appealing to the authority of the past.

It was Pugin who first linked architecture to social criticism when in 1835 he published Contrasts; or a Parallel between the Noble Edifices of the Middle Ages, and Corresponding Buildings of the Present Day, showing the Present Decay of Taste. Pugin believed that 19th century England was corrupt and irreligious, and because he saw architecture as a direct expression of the society which produced it, it was inevitable that the

---

13. Notes on the History of the Mountfort Family, p.2.

14. See Hugh Bowron's forthcoming M.A.thesis on the High Church Movement in Canterbury, University of Canterbury, 1975.

19th century had produced only debased and pagan, i.e. classical, architecture. The only solution was to revive not only the religion but also the architecture of the middle ages. Pugin's advocacy of Roman Catholicism was not generally acceptable but his architectural ideas were. In 1839 the Cambridge Camden Society was formed, dedicating itself to the preservation and revival of not only medieval English church architecture but also to the liturgical forms that went with it. Ten years later Ruskin's Seven Lamps of Architecture was published. He also called for the revival of medieval architecture for a similar variety of social, moral and aesthetic reasons, and his works reached a much wider public than those of Pugin, or the Ecclesiologists.[15]

During these years the currents of social and religious reform had followed a similar course to the developments in architectural theory. In Past and Present Carlyle had compared the 19th century, when society was dominated by capitalism and the "cash nexus" with an idealised view of the medieval world when a stable society had existed, regulated by bonds of deference and interdependence, and dominated by the spiritual authority of the church. At the same time the Tracts for the Times had called for the church to return to the ritual and doctrinal principles of an earlier age which had been neglected during the 18th and early part of the 19th century. In common with Pugin and Ruskin, Carlyle and the Tractarians also showed a

---

15. For a summary of the writings of Pugin, the Ecclesiologists and Ruskin, see N.Pevsner, Some Architectural Writers of the 19th Century, Oxford, 1972.

distrust of democracy and advocated the exercise of greater authority by those in power.

Out of these very attitudes, in which Mountfort shared, there arose the ideas behind the foundation of the Canterbury settlement. The Canterbury Association, which was established for the purpose of founding an Anglican Church settlement in New Zealand, was the idea of John Robert Godley and Edward Gibon Wakefield. However, it was Godley's ideas on colonisation which gave the Canterbury settlement its individual character. Godley developed an interest in colonisation after a visit to the United States and Canada in 1842 and this interest was stimulated by his disillusionment with the state of contemporary English society.[16] His experiences during the Irish potato famine of 1845 had made him afraid of the advent of democracy in Britain and had convinced him that western civilisation was on the point of collapse. He believed that the unrest of contemporary English society was the result of the rise of industrialisation and capitalism and the concomitant decline in "the old idea of an interdependent social system, in which the profit motive was secondary to considerations of stability and moral welfare."[17] Only through the spiritual authority of the church could this decline in society be reversed, but the church itself was in need of reform. Godley found himself in

---

16. For a discussion of Godley's views on colonisation on which the following passage is based, see R.C.Webb, "The Canterbury Association and its Settlement" in A History of Canterbury, V.1, pp.135 ff.

17. Ibid., p.138.

complete sympathy with the High Church reforms of the Oxford Movement which he believed would re-establish the Church's spiritual authority. By establishing a Church of England settlement in New Zealand with a complete diocesan establishment from bishop to parochial clergy, Godley hoped to put these principles into practice.

In reality, the Canterbury settlement was never a High Church settlement in the same way that the early colonies in New England were Puritan settlements. The membership of the Centerbury Association included both Tractarians and prominent Evangelicals, as well as those who were aligned to neither party. Nevertheless, the Canterbury settlement owed much to the new spirit within the Church of England which the Tractarians had brought about, while "the project of a Church of England settlement seems to have appealed first and more strongly to men whom the Tractarian movement had awakened to a sense of the Church's shortcomings...."[18]

A connection also exists between the Canterbury Association and the Ecclesiological Society. The High Church sympathies of the Society are well established, but there is no evidence to connect Godley himself with the Ecclesiologists. However, he was certainly aware of their activities and at least five members of the Canterbury Association were also members of the Ecclesiological Society. These included Lord John Manners, who was later

---

18. Ibid., p.140.

the founder of the "Young England" party. In addition there were nine diocesan bishops who belonged to the Association and it was the policy of the Ecclesiological Soceity to honour all diocesan bishops by making them patrons of the Society. The role the Ecclesiological Society played during the 1840s in sending church designs throughout the world, in many ways prefigures the establishment of the Canterbury settlement with an architect, well versed in the science of Ecclesiology amongst the first group of colonists.

Inevitably, the reality of the Canterbury Settlement fell far short of the ideals which inspired it. The first colonists arrived without their bishop and the conditions of colonial life soon produced a democratic and egalitarian society, the advent of which Godley had feared in England. But in one respect, the ideals of the Canterbury Association were transplanted to New Zealand for implicit in the Gothic style in which Mountfort worked in Canterbury, were all the aspirations and ideals of the settlement's founders. Mountfort's work therefore, creates a link not only with the traditions of English history, but with the social and religious reforms of 19th century England. His buildings exemplify the principles in which he believed, and on which the Settlement was founded.

Mountfort adopted not only the Gothic style, but also the architectural principles that had been derived from the study of Gothic buildings. The earliest and the clearest expression of these principles was made by Pugin in The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture (1841) and it is

not surprising that Mountfort followed Pugin's ideas closely when he set out his own architectural principles in 1857. The influence of Pugin's writing is apparent even in the way Mountfort set out his ideas, contrasting "ancient true principles" with "modern false principles" on opposite sides of the page. Because Mountfort set down his architectural principles only once, they are worth quoting in full. He began with the modern principles to which he was opposed. These were:

> To make buildings uniform and similar by equal and similar wings, corresponding doorways, windows of the same kind and size, level and regular elevations not broken up into parts of greater or less prominence and heights.

The ancient principles which governed Mountfort's work were:

> To make uniformity of design entirely subservient to utility. For example, never to insert a useless window, or an unnecessary buttress in one place, solely to fill up, or because it occurs in another corresponding place but to pile together, to insert, to add with any degree of fearless irregularity whatever.

The second group of principles again begins with the modern:

> To place effect before utility, as by building an inconvenient or unnecessary feature because it is supposed to look well. Hence we have doors, which give no entrance, turrets with no available interior, and chimneys which do not emit smoke. To arrange <u>exterior</u> elevations without regard to the nature of the <u>interior</u>, or to force the latter to suit the former. Hence the custom of building masks, either to hide necessary parts which do exist, or to give the idea of those which do not.

The second statement of ancient principles quickly reverts to an attack on false principles:

> To use decoration only as a means of relieving necessary constructive features, and to add any detail adventitiously for its own sake, solely for effect, and irrespectively of position, meaning or propriety - thus to make a blank doorway, to set up an unmeaning niche with no statue; to erect sham gables, and block off buttresses midway

> because the lower parts are not seen; are examples of Fales Principles.[19]

Mountfort's statement of architectural principles does not have the same clarity and logical force that is found in Pugin's True Principles but it is clear that Mountfort followed Pugin in all but his advocacy of Roman Catholicism. When Mountfort stated that the architect's role was to ensure "correct design, suitable decoration, and convenience of arrangement"[20] he was merely rephrasing Pugin's belief in the importance of "convenience, construction and propriety." This aspect of Pugin's theory as Pevsner has pointed out, is derived from eighteenth century French architectural theory.[21] Pugin and Mountfort's adoption of the Gothic style, and their advocacy of irregular planning based on functional requirements are, of course, opposed to classical theory. Their emphasis on irregularity is an expression of a concern with "truth" and "honesty" both in planning and in construction which plays an important part in Gothic revival theory. To follow true architectural principles was not only a prerequisite of designing good buildings, but a stern moral duty as well. Mountfort wrote that he endeavoured to design "honestly and naturally"[22] and he quoted Pugin's dictum that "Every building that is treated naturally without disguise or concealment cannot fail to look well."[23]

The idea that buildings should be treated "naturally" was equally an important as ideas about "truth" and "honesty". Implicit in Pugin's theory of architecture, and explicit in

---

19. Mountfort and Luck to the Colonial Secretary, p.12.

20. Ibid., p.6.

21. Pevsner, p.110.

22. Mountfort and Luck, p.4.

23. Ibid., p.13.

Mountfort's is the notion that architecture imitates nature, and in Ruskin's writing on architecture, imitation of nature becomes the major criterion for architectural excellence. In nature Mountfort found a further justification for his taste for irregularity.

> "Architecture" he wrote, "proposes to go to nature for lessons if not for models. Accordingly, we see in nature's buildings, the mountains and hills; not regularity of outline but diversity; buttresses, walls and turrets as unlike each other as possible, yet producing a granduer of effect not to be approached by any work, moulded to regularity of outline. The simple study of an oak or an elm tree would suffice to complete the regularity theory."

The notion that architecture imitates nature was not new. Palladio wrote in his Quattro Libri that "since architecture, like all the other arts, imitates nature, nothing can satisfy that is foreign from what is found in nature."[24] However, nature meant something very different to Palladio from what it meant to Mountfort three hundred years later. Palladio and Renaissance men in general saw in nature a harmony and logical order that was shared by all of God's creations. The "imitation of nature" meant a search for abstract principles of harmony and proportion.[25] For 19th century men the Industrial Revolution, and the Romantic Movement had destroyed the Renaisance vision of an ordered nature. The new view of nature saw it as something in flux, charged with energy, and power, and at its very heart a divine and mystical presence.

Mountfort responded to the granduer and power which he

---

24. Quoted in J.S.Ackerman, Palladio, Harmondsworth, 1966, p.160.

25. Ibid., p.160.

sensed in nature and aimed at recreating these responses in his buildings. As a Victorian with strong religious convictions, it is unlikely that Mountfort experienced the pantheistic response to nature of a Wordsworth. It is much more likely that he responded to nature in a similar way to the Victorian poet, Gerard Manly Hopkins. The contemplation of nature was, for Hopkins a deeply religious experience, and he saw in the irregularity and strangeness of nature the manifestation of God's presence in the world. In the poem, "Pied Beauty" he praises God for the beauties of asymetrically coloured forms and for "All things counter, original, spare, strange." It was natural forms such as these that inspired Mountfort's architecture. In the rhythms of Hopkins verse one also finds an exploration of irregularity that mirrors the asymmetry of the world he celebrated and, like Mountfort, Hopkins sought a medieval precedent for the irregularity of his "sprung rhythm."[26] It therefore comes as no surprise that Hopkins admired Gothic architecture and his notebooks contain many sketches of Gothic details. One even finds him discovering "the beauty of inscape" in the "great rudely arched timberframes" in the roof of an ancient barn.[27] Among contemporary architecture, Hopkins particularly admired the work of William Butterfield, one of the finest of the Gothic revival architects.

The contemplation of nature in all its varied aspects provided the stimulus for the artist's imagination. It was the elevation of the imagination which allowed the romantic

---

26. Poems and Prose of Gerald Manly Hopkins, ed. W.K. Gardner, Harmondsworth, 1963, p.11.

27. Ibid., pp.125-6.

artist to share in the creativity of God, and which transformed the artist's view of both art and the world. The rules of classical art were no longer tenable and instead the artist's desire for originality and self expression were emphasised. These changes effected architecture no less than the other arts.

In Mountfort's case, the break with the rules of classical architecture has already been made clear. In his defence of irregularity in architecture Mountfort quotes from Lord Kames's Elements of Criticism (1761). The quotation itself is ambiguous and adds little to Mountfort's argument, but more significant is the fact that he should have drawn on an 18th century writer who was influenced by Burke and who had made a "frontal attack against the classical concept of proportion. Judgement of proportion", in Kames' view, "rests with the percipient".[28] However, Mountfort wanted to establish more than the relativity of taste. He goes on to argue that the architect was failing in his duty if he shrank from the task of influencing the taste of his employer. Here he quotes Goethe in support of his argument. The situation of the architect merely following the tastes of his patron has been completely reversed. It also becomes clear that what Mountfort is really arguing for in the name of "irregularity" is neither a kind of "functionalism"nor even "truth to nature" but the architect's right to self expression. The Gothic style becomes, finally, the medium through which the architect expresses his individuality.

---

28. R.Wittkower "Classical Theory and Eighteenth Century Sensibility" in Palladio and English Palladianism, London, 1974, p.201.

Chapter Three

ECCLESIOLOGY AND THE EARLY CHURCH DESIGNS, 1852-1863

During the 1840s and 1850s the ideas of the Cambridge Camden Society were the dominant influence on Anglican church architecture. Their ideas reached a wide audience which included both architects and clergy, through their journal The Ecclesiologist published from 1841.[1] It is not possible to discuss the ideas of the Ecclesiologists in any detail here, but a few of their most important ideas must be mentioned. First among these is the notion of "picturesque utility", derived largely from Pugin. Instead of fitting the various uses of a building into a preconceived form, the architect was urged to allow the uses of the building to dictate the form. Thus the expression of various functions lead to irregular plans. For the Ecclesiologists it was important that a church should have at least three distinct units; a large chancel, a nave, and a porch on the side of the nave. The expression of function was important, not simply as an end in itself, but for reasons of "truthfulness". Similar moral concerns of "honesty" and "reality" effected their attitude towards construction and materials. They were also concerned with the symbolism of churches and in 1843 two of the Soceity's founders, Neale and Webb published a translation of Durandus's The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments, the major medieval authority on symbolism. The Ecclesiologists' interest in church design did not stop with ritualistic considerations and by the end of the 1840s they had published articles on

---

1. Mountfort's copy of Volume I of The Ecclesiologist is now in the National Library, Wellington.

virtually every aspect of church design. They also counted amongst their contributors, architects such as Butterfield and Street.[2]

From the first the Society was concerned with church building outside the British Isles, and the first issue of the Ecclesiologist mentions the need for sending church designs to New Zealand. Drawings for a cathedral and parish churches were to be sent to Bishop Selwyn. "Norman is the style adopted because, as the work will be chiefly done by native artists, it seems natural to teach them first that style which first prevailed in our own country."[3] A design, based on the Romanesque Than Church, near Caen, was sent to New Zealand soon after this. The selection of a Romanesque church as a prototype for churches in New Zealand suggests that the earliest development of medieval architecture was considered appropriate for a country that was still in the earliest stages of Christianity. In 1842, Selwyn himself suggested a building, in the style of Durham, Christchurch or Romsey as a cathedral for Auckland.[4]

By 1845, the Ecclesiologists attitude had changed. Working drawings were prepared from three churches, intended as models for the colonies. The churches were All Saints, Teversham, Cambridgeshire, St Mary, Arnold, Nottinghamshire and St Michael,

---

2. For the Ecclesiologists see: White, J.F., The Cambridge Movement, Cambridge 1962; Muthesius, S. The High Victorian Movement in Architecture, 1850-1870, London, 1972, Ch.1. and Clark, K., The Gothic Revival, London, 1962, Ch.8.

3. The Ecclesiologist, V.1, 1841, pp.4-5 Hereafter abbreviated to E.

4. E., V.2, 1842, p.135.

Long Stanton, Cambridgeshire. Tracings of the latter were sent to the United States, and tracings of the two former were sent to Australia and New Zealand.[5] The style of the models was Early English, in the case of All Saints and St Michael's, and Early Decorated in the case of St Mary's. Early English was considered more appropriate for America and the colonies as its simpler forms and lack of ostentation could be more easily reproduced where there was a shortage of funds and skilled craftsmen.[6]

There was still some doubt in the minds of the Ecclesiologists when they again commented on church building in the colonies in 1847. They no longer felt themselves qualified to advise on how Gothic should be adapted to other countries.[7] This change in attitude, in fact, reflected a more general trend away from the strict imitation of medieval models which was to lead to the ecclecticism of the 1850s.[8] This trend found its earliest expression amongst the church designs intended for foreign countries. These designs fell into two categories, the Speluncar and Hyperborean Gothic.[9] Speluncar Gothic was intended for tropical regions and does not concern us here. Hyperborean Gothic, however, was intended for northern climates, such as North America, but it was also considered appropriate for southern climates. Hyperborean Gothic was most likely to be built in wood as this material fulfilled the need for topographical

---

5. E.,V.4, 1845, p.23.

6. Stanton, pp.93-97.

7. E., V.7, p.15.

8. Hersey, G.L., High Victorian Gothic: A Study in Associationism, Baltimore, 1972, pp.74-5.

9. Ibid., pp.75-92.

expression in countries such as Canada, the United States, or for that matter, New Zealand. Wood, however, had an additional significance as many scholars maintained that medieval architecture had developed from wooden prototypes. It was, therefore, appropriate to establish Gothic in these countries in wood.[10] Wood as a building material also had symbolic connotations, as the Reverend William Scott pointed out.[11] The ark, the first spiritual church, had been built of wood. Furthermore, the ship is the emblem of the church and the inverted hull of the ship presents the image of the church's wooden roof. Thus, the wooden church was a symbol of "the ship of the Christian church".

Scott was also concerned with the problems of building wooden churches, and he gives a list of examples of wooden construction that might serve as models for the present day. Lychgates and the halls of timber mansions, as well as the ancient barns would provide examples for the construction of piers and arches, and there were also wooden porches of churches in the Weald of Kent and Essex. For walls there were the examples of the churches of Greenstead in Essex, and Lower Peover. Scott also mentioned the timber churches of Norway which had received considerable attention at that time.[12] In all, he concluded that there was scarcely a part of the church for which there were not precedents for wooden construction.

---

10. Ibid., p.83.

11. E., V.9, 1849, p.14.

12. Ibid., p.19.

The first church which is unmistakeably the product
(1.) of these ideas is Richard Carpenter's design for a wooden church for Tristan d'Acunha. It was designed about 1850 and first published in 1851.[13] Carpenter's church has an aisled nave, a chancel and both north and south porches. The heavy timber frame is exposed on the outside and the spaces between filled in by wooden panels. It seems likely, that the design developed from a study of the very precedents listed by Scott in 1849.

These ideas on wooden churches were fully developed by the time Mountfort left for New Zealand in 1850. He had probably seen Carpenter's design for the wooden church before he left England or if not, he must have seen it soon after it was published. The fact that Mountfort came to New Zealand as a member of a Church of England colony, also indicates a change within the Ecclesiological Society. Frank Wills had been sent to North America by the Society in 1845 to build churches in the new diocese of New Brunswick.[14] Clearly, by 1850 it was no longer acceptable for designs to be sent to the colonies from England. It was necessary for the architect to be on the spot so that the ideas of the Society could be interpreted in a manner appropriate to local conditions.

Mountfort's first design for a church in New Zealand was not influenced by Carpenter's design, but it is clearly influenced by William Scott's essay on wooden churches. The second

---

13. See Hersey, p.84.

14. Stanton, p.127.

part of this essay was devoted to the problems of building churches in the wilderness of North America, and Mountfort incorporated many of Scott's suggestions in his own design for a church at Hemingford in 1852. Scott deplored the prevalence of flat horizontal lines in the weatherboards of frame churches and in the walls of log churches found in North America. This was "fatal to the great principle of Christian architecture, its verticality."[15] The one surviving example of a medieval timber church in England, that at Greenstead, had walls of vertical construction and Scott saw no reason for the horizontal arrangement which prevailed in America. He advocated the construction of walls from two layers of split logs with a space of insulation between them to combat the cold. The roof of the church should be steep, forming an angle of no more than 90° at the apex. It should be shingle covered and have wide eaves projecting at least two feet beyond the walls. The ecclesiastical character of the church was to depend not "upon its ornament or even upon its light and shade, except that...gained by the bold projection of the eaves; it will probably present externally neither buttresses nor strings, neither base nor hood mouldings, no corbeltable, no dripstones. Its material will be simple, its frontage flat - its height of wall comparatively insignificant. All must depend upon good proportion, upon the bold lines and pitch of the roof.... We shall be sure never to miss a true ecclesiastical character if proportion is good and the materials honestly and really worked."[16]

Mountfort's Hemingford Church has log walls, the timbers arranged vertically. He differs from Scott's prescription

---

15. E., V.9, p.23.

16. Ibid., p.25.

by using unsplit logs which are morticed into the wall plate. The layer of insulation recommended for the climatic extremes of Canada was unnecessary in the more temperate climate of New Zealand. Also, because the logs were morticed into the wall plate they had sufficient stability to allow Mountfort to dispense with the frame. The log walls therefore, acted both as wall covering, and as the structural frame of the building, there being no distinction between the two functions. The proportions of the church follow Scott's recommendations. The walls are low, about nine feet high, and the roof is high and pitched at an angle of 60°. The gable thus forms an equilateral triangle, the form considered by Pugin to be the most beautiful for the pitch of a roof or gable, and also the form most suited to resist the effects of the weather.[17] The steep roof makes the church as high as it is long, and this feature is emphasised by the vertical logs of the walls. Mountfort clearly considered good proportions to be those which emphasised the vertical dimension. This characteristic is found in all Mountfort's later church designs and it is as well to recall Scott's statement that verticality is the great principle of Christian architecture.

The church is illuminated by a large window in the east end, with a pair of lancets placed high under the eaves at the eastern end of the side walls, and a further pair at the western end opposite the porch. Scott had recommended that windows be placed high under the eaves in order to counteract the brilliant sunlight experienced in North America. This was necessary to produce the sombre and subdued light which the

---

17. True Principles, p.12.

Ecclesiologists admired in Early English churches.[18] The arrangement of the windows creates a focus of light around the altar, thus emphasising the ritualistic focal point of the church. It was probably for this reason that the Ecclesiologists insisted that there should always be a greater number of lights at the eastern end of a church than at the western end.[19]

The east window itself was filled with tracery made from wood and derived from the reticulated tracery characteristic of Decorated Gothic. Scott gave considerable attention to the problem of wooden tracery and concluded that if tracery was cut from a single block of wood in a similar way to the cutting of stone tracery, it was admissable. The type of tracery depended on the qualities of the wood used. Pine wood, for example, "admits much less variety, much less of mass and carving than does oak."[20] Mountfort would have found justification for his use of decorated tracery in the last paragraph of Scott's essay. "Certainly in a country like New Zealand, where hard wood is so common, and where great powers of wood carving seem natural to the people....the hardness of the wood and the superior size of the timber would allow a much more elaborate style for wooden churches than can be thought of in Canada and New Brunswick."[21] The significance of Mountfort's use of decorated forms will be

---

18. E.,V.2, 1843, p.20.

19. E., V1, 1841, p.173.

20. E., V.9, 1849, p.24.

21. Ibid., p.13.

discussed below.

For all its apparent simplicity, the Hemingford Church fulfilled the Ecclesiologists requirements for symbolism. Neale and Webb had stressed the importance of trinitarian symbolism in their introduction to Durandus, and they noticed that a triple window was the "admitted emblem of the Most Holy Trinity."[22] The east window is divided into three lancets with three quatrofoils above for good measure. The window is also framed by the equilateral triangle of the gable, itself a trinitarian symbol that recurs in a more developed form in Mountfort's next church designs. At Hemingford trinitarian symbolism is found throughout the building, in the entrance porch, and in the wooden tracery of the roof.

In its original form the Hemingford Church does not posess the three elements that the Ecclesiologists thought necessary for every church; that is, a chancel, nave and porch. However, Mountfort intended the original church to form the chancel of a much larger church built in more permanent materials. The chancel would invoke associations of the period when population and resources were limited, and the nave and tower would reflect the later period when both population and material resources were greater. The church itself was never built, and the very primitiveness of its construction isolates it from Mountfort's subsequent church designs. In many respects it looks forward to the churches which immediately follow it, particularly in the verticality of its proportions, its treatment of lighting and

---

22. Quoted by Clark, p.143.

the integration of symbolism into the structure of the building. The provision to build the church in stages also characterised many of Mountfort's later works, both secular and religious, and piece-meal construction emerges very clearly as a characteristic of colonial building. However, it is the primitivism of the design wherein its true significance lies. This rude timber church, in which natural materials are barely transformed from their original state, suggests a return to a primitive state of society with man in closer contact with nature and with God. The design represents the romantic ideal which underlies all Mountfort's work in New Zealand.

Holy Trinity, Lyttelton was Mountfort's first church
(6-7.) built in New Zealand. Work began in April 1852 and the church was opened in January of the following year. Mountfort's design for a large church, with an aisled nave, clerestry, and massive eastern tower suggests that Holy Trinity was intended as a cathedral establishment. The presence of an elaborate timber lych gate on the north side of the churchyard, and the fact that Mountfort's drawing was inscribed to John Robert Godley the founder of the Canterbury settlement, supports this belief. Also, in 1852 it was still thought that Lyttelton would become the principal town of Canterbury, and it was natural that the cathedral should be built there. However, only the first four bays of the nave were built.

The church was built of a timber framework filled in with brick noggings. The timber frame formed the structural skeleton and the bricks acted simply as a non-structural wall surface. Thus there was a clear distinction between the

structural members of the building and the wall covering, unlike the Hemingford Church where the two functions are inseparable. The massive timbers of the wooden framework were clearly visible from both outside and inside the church, fulfilling the Ecclesiologists' requirements of truthful expression of structure. The timber braces form a series of triangles on the west front, and the same motif is repeated along the walls of the nave and aisles. This arrangement contrasts with the grid-like frame of Carpenter's wooden church. The triangulation system is emphasised in the western gable, which is again an equilateral triangle, and is divided by a further series of triangles. This system exists not simply for structural purposes but as a recuring symbol of the Trinity. It is derived from the Hemingford Church design but here it is extended to form a recurrent structural and symbolic motif. The frame construction creates an all-over surface pattern on the walls of the church, breaking them up into a series of small compartments. The windows are inserted within this web-like network, their position and size predetermined by structural requirements. Because of this, they probably allowed a very limited amount of light into the church. Even the provision of the clerestory can have made little difference to what was almost certainly a very dimly illuminated interior.

At Holy Trinity, verticality is emphasised in a much more dramatic way than was possible within the very modest dimensions of the Hemingford Church. This church is also very high in relation to its base, and this is emphasised by the low viewpoint

of Mountfort's perspective drawing, a feature which characterises almost all such drawings from Mountfort's hand. The tower also extends the verticality of the church, an emblem as Pugin pointed out, of the resurrection.[23]

The tower is the only one to appear in Mountfort's early church designs, and it admirably illustrates Pugin's description of a Christian tower. It is "formed of...solid buttresses and walls rising from a massive base, and gradually diminishing and enriching as they rise, till they were terminated in a heaven-pointing spire surrounded by clusters of pinnacles, and forming a beautiful and instructive emblem of a Christian's brightest hopes."[24] The increasing elaborateness of the tower, the nearer it reaches heaven, is, as John Betjeman has pointed out, a characteristic of Victorian architecture.[25] The design of the tower also gave Mountfort the opportunity to employ Gothic forms with considerable imaginative freedom, and its height and elaborateness suggest that he was unconstrained by practical considerations of construction. It seems likely that the tower was designed without any intentions of building it, and it remains as a testimony to Mountfort's spiritual enthusiasm.

Even when only half built, Holy Trinity dominated the Lyttelton skyline, and had it ever been completed it would have assumed the same relationship to the town of Lyttelton as the medieval cathedrals shared with their surrounding towns. Lyttelton was the main port of entry for emigrants arriving in Canterbury

---

23. True Principles, p.8.
24. Ibid., p.57.
25. Hersey, p.107.

and the church on the hillside would have dominated their first impressions of the settlement. Holy Trinity would have stood as an emblem of the Church's presence in Canterbury, and of the role that Godley hoped it would play in the life of the colony. Mountfort was not to design another church on a comparable scale until the 1880s when he designed Napier Cathedral.

Another drawing by Mountfort, closely related to the
(8.) Holy Trinity design, is preserved in the Canterbury Museum Library. The drawing shows a church clearly designed for the same site, and resting on the same buttressed stone foundation used for Holy Trinity. This church is only four bays long, the final bay forming the chancel which is indicated by an iron ridge crest. The aisles and the nave are narrower and the clerestory level has been omitted. The fact that the side walls do not reach the edge of the foundation suggests that Mountfort prepared this design when it became apparent that his original design for Holy Trinity was to be only partially built, but after the foundations had been constructed. The new design solves the problem of the ungainly proportions of the church as built, yet retains its essential characteristics, with the exception of the tower.

In 1854 it was decided to demolish Holy Trinity because it was no longer structurally sound, but this blow to Mountfort's reputation did not prevent him from receiving the commission to
(9.) design St Bartholomew's, Kaiapoi, in the following year.[26] St Bartholomew's was a small country church and is consequently much more modest in size and pretensions than Holy Trinity.

---

26. S.Parr, Canterbury Pilgrimage, Christchurch, 1951, p.174.

Nevertheless it has several features in common. At first only the nave was built, the transepts and chancel being added in 1862. The structural system which Mountfort used develops that of Holy Trinity. The skeletal timber framework is retained but it is now completely based on an equilateral triangle module. This unit forms the principal rafters and floor sleepers, which form the major triangle. The walls are formed inside this and rise to one third of the overall height, leaving a smaller equilateral triangle to form the roof. The same module forms the diagonal braces of the walls themselves, and it is repeated throughout the design. The structural framework is exposed on the exterior and the wall covering of vertical boards and battens lies behind it. Although the brick nogging of the Lyttelton church has been replaced by boards and battens, the structural principle is the same, and the expression of structure is equally clear. The structure also embodies within it the repeated symbol of the Trinity. The structural frame has the same decorative quality as that of Holy Trinity, and the simil-
(10.) arity between the two is clearly evident in the west end of St Bartholomew's.

The structural system which Mountfort used at Kaiapoi also reflects the influence of Bishop Selwyn's ideas on architecture. Selwyn suggested that the main roof timbers should be extended to the ground and be concealed in the walls of porch and vestry, so that the walls would have little weight to support. By this means the church would be secure from the effects of earthquakes

or high winds.[27] Frederick Thatcher had incorporated these ideas in his design for the St John's College Chapel in Auckland in 1847, where he had also used external timber framing in a decorative manner similar to Mountfort's. Mountfort can not have seen the St John's Chapel before he designed St Bartholomew's, as he did not travel to Auckland until 1856, but he could easily have heard of Selwyn's ideas through members of the clergy. The failure of Holy Trinity may well have prompted Selwyn to inform his colleagues in Canterbury of his own ideas on church building. Mountfort's use of the extended roof beams differs in practice from Thatcher's. At St John's the roof beams are cut short wherever they cannot be incorporated into the walls of either porch or transepts. Mountfort, however, leaves the beams exposed and makes the triangular module the basic unit of his whole design.

The proportions of the church follow the general trend of the earlier designs, but the large tent like roof which dominates the low walls, gives the church a humble character that was considered appropriate for country churches.[28] The lighting also follows the example of the two previous churches. The nave windows are placed high under the eaves, their small size and position dictated by the structural framework that surrounds
(11.) them. At both east and west ends of the nave there were originally groups of three lancets placed high in the gable like the east window of the Hemingford Church. The interior is cast in an

---

27. M.Alington, Frederick Thatcher and St Pauls, Wellington 1965, p.44.

28. See Muthesius, pp.13-14.

appropriate ecclesiastial gloom, with greater concentrations of light at the east and west ends.

The 1862 additions to St Bartholomew's reveal a change in Mountfort's attitude towards church design. The pitch of the roof in both transepts and chancel was dictated by the roof of the nave and the transepts still use the triangulation system of the nave. However, the external framing has been supressed in favour of plain board and batten walls with more conventional internal framing. The wall boards now function as an all over exterior skin, instead of merely acting as infill for a structural framework. This change may have resulted from considerations of expense, and for practical reasons as the exposed framing would inevitably deteriorate more rapidly than internal framing. Thatcher had also abandoned this system after his initial experiments at St John's and St Barnabas, Parnell. However, the real reasons for this change will become clearer when we look at St Mary's, Halswell, built in the following year.

Before turning to St Mary's, it is worth looking at the
(12.) bell tower which Mountfort designed for St Michael's Church, Christchurch. The tower was built to house the church bell which had been recast in England. The bell was valued as a time-keeper in Christchurch and the tower was completed and the bell re-hung by September 1861.[29] According to Mountfort's perspective drawing the tower was intended to function as a lych gate as well but it does not seem to have been used for

---

29. Thompson, C. The History of St Michael's and All Angels, Christchurch, 1971, pp.21-24.

this purpose. Mountfort solved the problem of how to support a wooden tower made top heavy by the weight of the bell, by means of interlocking timber buttresses which double the width of the tower at its base without obscuring the vertical lines of the tower. Above these buttresses a series of curved braces literally branch out to support a canopy that protects the lower timbers from the weather and makes a clear distinction between the lower level which gives structural support, and the upper level which performs the real function of the tower, the bell chamber. As it rises upwards the tower becomes more richly decorated, finally terminating in a bunchy finial. The tower gives the impression of vegetable growth like the tree which "spreads and divides as it rises upwards" in the natural analogy used by Pugin.[30] The Gothic forms which Mountfort used, the foliations, crockets, and finials are all derived from natural models, and Mountfort probably shared the fascination which many 19th century architects and artists from Gilbert Scott to Hopkins experienced in trying to discover the natural models of these forms. The finial atop the bell tower is like a thrusting terminal bud, reaching towards heaven.

The tower had an additional significance for Mountfort's contemporaries in Christchurch, as the Lyttelton Times observed.[31] When built it formed a landmark as it stood "well above the surrounding buildings" and helped to break "the flat monotony of our skyline." The emphatic verticality of the tower, breaking

---

30. True Principles, p.15.

31. Thompson, p.23-4.

the monotonous horizontality of the Canterbury plains was to become an essential feature in Mountfort's work.

(13.) St Mary's Halswell was opened in November 1863 and in several respects it indicates a change in Mountfort's approach to architecture. It is, first of all, the clearest example among the early churches of the irregular functional planning advocated by the Ecclesiologists. Each part of the church forms a separate unit, clearly distinguishable by variations of size and roof level. There is only one porch and the vestry on the north side is counterbalanced only by a small organ chamber on the south side. (The east end of the church was burnt in 1966 and only the nave remains). The most important difference between this, and the early churches is the structural system used. The exposed framework of the earlier designs has been suppressed and the walls are covered by a skin of vertical boards and battens, like those used in the 1862 additions to St Bartholomews. But the nature of the frame has also changed. Instead of using diagonals as the main structural members, Mountfort here uses vertical studs, placed relatively close together. This system recalls that used in the Hemingford design, where the vertical logs form both frame and wall surface. Now the two functions are separated but the vertical boards and battens clearly express the kind of wooden framework that lies beneath them. As a result the wall surface is plain, uninterrupted by the diagonals of an exposed frame, and with a clear vertical emphasis. By expressing the form of the interior framing in the weatherboards of the exterior, Mountfort was able to express the structure of his building in a "truthful" and "real" way,

and just as effectively as when the timber frame was itself exposed.

The change in structural system probably resulted in a change in the proportions of the church. The height of the walls has increased and the nave is widerin relation to its length. Also the pitch of the roof is less steep than in previous designs, creating a more balanced relationship between wall and roof surface. The arrangement of windows also reflects the change in the timber frame. The windows are both wider, and much higher. Because the frame no longer uses diagonal braces as the main structural members, this increase in size could be easily achieved, the windows occupying the full width of the space between the vertical supports, and extending as high, or as low as required. The height of the windows is, in fact varied in each part of the building. The chancel windows are high, extending up into the gable. Those of the west end are lower, but slightly higher than those of the sides of the nave. The vestry window is lower still. The change reflects the various functions of the different parts of the church as well as introducing a new element of irregularity into the design. Mountfort has also broken away from the strict ecclesiological rule which stated that the number of windows at the east end must exceed those of the west end, for the four lancets and rose windows of the west easily outnumber the group of three lancets at the east.

Inside the church the effect is of a very soft and even light which fills the whole building. Even the roof is clearly lit, partly because it is lower than in the earlier churches

but also because it receives light from the rose window in the western gable. On the exterior the deep shadows cast by the eaves contract with large areas of evenly lighted wall and roof surface. The horizontal lines of shadow formed by the eaves and string course are broken up into corrugations by the boards and battens of the wall surface, creating a similar pattern to that formed by the crenelated ridge crest against the sky.

The differences between St Mary's and St Bartholomew's built eight years earlier, is exemplified by the differences in their respective bellcots. That at St Bartholomew's is structurally complex, built up from interlocking triangles and diagonals, it is heavy, and enclosed by its pyrimidal cap. The St Mary's bellcot is structurally simple, supported by two vertical posts, it is light, and it is open. The same characteristics are found in the bodies of the churches themselves. St Bartholomew's with its heavy timber beams and complicated structural frame sits heavily on the ground, enclosed and dominated by its vast expanse of roof. The simplified and light timber frame of St Mary's is reflected in the corresponding lightness and simplicity of the building itself. The wall functions no longer as mere infill but acts as a thin skin both covering and expressing the vertical timber frame.

The change in the structural system introduces a new compositional element into Mountfort's church designs. Before the position of the windows was determined by the structural system but now their position is more flexible. In the earlier designs the windows were of secondary importance in the overall

surface effect, but from now on they play the major part in the articulation of the wall surface. The change meant that the irregular planning which had so far been explored only on the ground plan, could now be introduced into the designing of the walls as well. Windows could be placed exactly where they were needed and not have to be placed within a predetermined framework. The introduction of the string course at St Mary's is a direct result of this change. It runs right round the building, changing in level according to the position of the windows, or in response to the changing functions of the interior. The arrangement of the windows and the changes of level of the string course are still tentative at St Mary's, but within a few years the handling of these elements becomes much bolder. These changes are accompanied by much brighter and more natural lighting within the church. From this time on the problem of how to get light into a church interested Mountfort much more than trying to restrict the amount of light.

The development in Mountfort's church designs which occurred during the early sixties, at least on one level, reflects a change in attitude in the Gothic revival movement in England, which had begun during the 1850s. Gothic revival architecture began to exhibit an increasing concern for the continuous wall surface, divided according to the functional requirements of the interior. This step followed logically from the principles of free planning, and as Muthesius has suggested, it represents "the final dissolution of the classical principle of symmetry in architecture."[32] The developments in

---

32. Muthesius p.11.

England no doubt influenced Mountfort but he can only have learnt of these developments at second hand, and he may well have reached similar conclusions on his own. Also, his use of wood as a building material, instead of stone, meant that ideas developed in England had to be rethought in terms of colonial conditions.

The catalyst for this change of approach may have been A.J.Downing's The Architecture of Country Houses (1850) and the evidence of other early buildings suggests that Mountfort knew Downing's book by 1859.[33] Downing himself was influenced by Pugin and the Ecclesiologists and he advocated the use of vertical timber frames, covered by vertical board and batten weatherboards, for the construction of houses. Mountfort would have found in Downing's writing, the same concern with "truthfulness" and "reality" in construction with which he was already familiar. Downing was also concerned with ease of construction and the economical use of timber and the system of building he advocated was well adapted to these considerations. For Mountfort this was equally important as buildings in Canterbury had to be built quickly, without highly skilled labour, and for a minimum of cost. The formal qualities of "the stick style"[34] as Scully termed the architecture which developed from Downing's synthesis of ideas, also closely resembles those of Mountfort's church. Scully's description of the characteristics of a "stick style" design fits Mountfort's church equally well. "The

---

33. See Chapter 5, pp.101-2.

34. Vincent Scully "Romantic Rationalism and the Expression of Structure in Wood," The Art Bulletin, V.35, 1953, pp.121-142.

siding is vertical, with battens; the roof is a light and projecting plane, supported by its rafters which are left visible, and the whole casts a deep shadow. The building has a light, match-box look in which the feeling of the wall is entirely that of a thin skin of wooden boards."[35] Downing's ideas thus allowed Mountfort to develop his style of church architecture in a way that was better adapted to colonial conditions, as well as to his new formal ideas. At the same time he was able to retain his concern for a truthful use of materials and the expression of structure which had characterised his earlier designs. From 1863 on the exposed timber frame does not re-appear in Mountfort's work.

There is a further change evident in the Halswell church that so far has not been touched on. The change occurs in what the 19th century termed the "style" of the building, meaning the period of architectural history from which the decorative vocabulary of a building was derived. In the early 1840s the Ecclesiologists had established a clear hierarchy between the styles of medieval architecture most suitable for imitation in modern churches. Decorated Gothic was considered the best as it was the most perfect expression of the period of greatest Christian faith during the middle ages. Early English was considered the next best style but the late periods of Gothic exhibited an artistic and moral decline in the eyes of the Ecclesiologists.[36]

Decorated was considered the only style admissable for

---

35. Scully, p.133.

36. See J.White, pp.88-90.

revival in Britain, but in the colonies the situation was more complex. It has already been noted above that Romanesque and Early English designs were considered more suitable for reproduction in the colonies. In New Zealand, Frederick Thatcher had adapted Early English forms in his designs for St John's College Chapel in 1847, and in his subsequent church buildings. There was a clear precedent for Early English church designs in the colonies, with examples already built in New Zealand by the time Mountfort made his first church designs in this country.

In his early designs Mountfort ignored these precedents and used forms derived from Decorated Gothic. The reticulated tracery in the east window of the Hemingford Church, the ogee curves in the window leads of Holy Trinity or in the barge boards of the St Micheal's bell tower, all indicate that Mountfort regarded the "style" of these buildings as Decorated. There are also contemporary descriptions of Mountfort's secular buildings of this period which identify the style as "middle pointed" or in other words "Decorated".[37] The design of St Mary's Halswell introduces features derived from Early English Gothic. This is apparent in the simple curves of the trefoil window heads, and in the rose window of the west end which is of a type found in Early English buildings.

The reasons why Mountfort initially chose to use Decorated Gothic forms, and then later abandoned these forms in favour of Early English details, makes an interesting parallel with the formal changes that occurred in the buildings at the same time. As a student of Carpenter, he was well aware of the

37 The Lyttelton Times, 11 June 1862

importance which the Ecclesiologists attached to Decorated Gothic, and Carpenter's wooden church had employed Decorated forms in the window heads and the barge boards. William Scott's suggestion that New Zealand timber was susceptible to a rich decorative treatment was surely influential. Finally the nature of the Canterbury settlement itself, with its strong emphasis on the role of the church in the new society, probably made Decorated seem more appropriate from the beginning.

By 1863 the reasons for using Decorated were much less compelling. The Ecclesiologists themselves had abandoned their dogmatic distinction between the different periods of Gothic by the mid fifties, and this was symptomatic of a change which had lead the most advanced architects, among them Street and Butterfield, to draw on a wide range of historical sources. There was a trend towards the use of earlier styles and this was exemplified by Gilbert Scott's design for Christchurch Cathedral. The plans, which arrived in Christchurch in 1862[38] revealed a severe use of Early English details which must have impressed Mountfort. By 1863 he had also seen Thatcher's churches in Auckland which employed Early English forms. There was little reason for Mountfort to continue to use an ornamental vocabulary which must have proved, at best, difficult to adapt to colonial conditions. The difficulty of finding local craftsmen who could execute the details of Decorated ornamentation, and the expense involved made a change to Early English a logical step.

---

38. McKenzie, G.M., The History of Christchurch Cathedral, Christchurch, 1931, p.29.

St Mary's Halswell forms the basis for all Mountfort's later timber churches. In this building Mountfort was able to fully develop the ideas of the Ecclesiologists in a way that was suited to New Zealand conditions. That this solution reflected architectural ideas that developed in the United States at the same time and under similar conditions is not surprising. It is just possible that Mountfort arrived at the same conclusions as Downing without a direct influence taking place. Both men were influenced by the same aspects of English architectural theory, and both were working in countries where wood was an important building material. Whatever the case, during his first twelve years in New Zealand, Mountfort developed the Ecclesiological hyperborean Gothic church, into a structure that showed the characteristics of the American "stick style".

During the next thirty years Mountfort designed many timber churches, culminating in St Mary's, Parnell, the largest, and the finest of these designs. The style of these churches does not remain static, but all the essential characteristics of the later churches are apparent in St Mary's Halswell. Behind these designs lie the experiments of the 1850s. The Hemingford Church remains as possibly the only example of some of the Ecclesiologists least known ideas while the Lyttelton Church and St Bartholomew's, Kaiapoi, represent a highly individual contribution to the history of the 19th century wooden church architecture.

Chapter Four

PROVINCIAL ARCHITECT, 1855 - 1865

Mountfort's most important undertaking as the Provincial Architect for Canterbury was the design of the Provincial Council Buildings, and this project occupied his attention for ten years, from 1855 when he produced his first design until 1865 when the stone Council Chamber was completed. During this time he changed the original design frequently and it is possible to follow the development of Mountfort's style and the social and economic development of Canterbury during this period in the various phases of the building's construction.

There was little question of what historical style was appropriate for the new government buildings. Barry and Pugin's design for the new Palace of Westminster had established Gothic as the national style of England and it was natural that the Canterbury colonists should follow the example of the parent country. Gothic was also appropriate because it was emblematic of the link between the government in New Zealand, and that of Great Britain, and because it evoked the medieval origin of British law and government. In any case, Mountfort's own predelictions would have lead him to choose Gothic.

His first design for the Government buildings was
(14.) completed early in 1855 and his perspective drawing was signed and approved by Fitzgerald on 10th March of that year. For some reason, probably lack of funds, the complex was not built, and no further progress was made until 1858. The drawing is interesting as a record of Mountfort's original conception for

the Government buildings. The high viewpoint of the perspective drawing shows the composition of the buildings clearly. They are arranged to form a rectangle with an open space in the centre. The focal point of the design is the stone records chamber in the centre, and a series of axes radiate from this point. The dominant axis runs east-west, from the tower over the main entrance of the offices, to the library which cuts through the east side of the rectangle. A subordinate axis formed by the gables which extend from the council chamber and range of offices on the north side, crosses this in a north-south direction. The whole complex is thus arranged on a grid system with the records chamber in its centre, forming a parallel with the grid system of the Christchurch streets with the Cathedral at its centre. However, Mountfort's composition does not remain enclosed and ordered like the grid pattern of the streets, as the west part extends beyond the confines of the rectangle and the public hall at the south end cannot be confined within the central group. In the same way the kitchens push out in the north east corner, while at the south east corner only a tenuous link is established between the council chamber and the clerk and speaker's rooms. The plan thus suggests the possibilities of organic growth beyond the confines of the central rectangle.

On this basic axial plan, Mountfort arranged the various parts of the buildings in a highly irregular fashion. Throughout the design it seems that Mountfort was consciously avoiding regularity. The separate parts of the complex are each clearly differentiated, forming separate units of different sizes and

with separate roofs. The library, for instance, cuts through the east front at right angles and the council chamber forms a further distinct unit on the south side. Each part of the design is differentiated according to its function within the whole complex, so that the irregularity of the design results from a desire to express the different role of each unit as well as a desire for picturesqueness. Pugin had insisted that the plan of a building should develop naturally from the functions of the interior, and that the elevation should follow the plan, rather than attempt to fit the varying functions of a building into a preconceived form. Mountfort's design illustrates perfectly Pugin's notion of "picturesque utility". The design also shows a concern for "propriety", that each part of the building should be treated in a manner that was appropriate to its function. Thus, the library, council chamber and public hall are treated in a richer manner than the rest of the building while the refreshment rooms have a more domestic appearance.

The model on which Mountfort based his design may have been Pugin's drawing of Mary Magdelen College which appeared in True Principles. The arrangement of the building around a central quadrangle, the cloister-like corridor, the entrance tower with its oriel window, and the clear distinctions between the various parts of the complex all suggest that the design is based on a medieval collegiate building, if not on Pugin's drawing. There is, of course, a vast difference in scale and in the materials used between Mountfort's design and its medival models, but their composition and underlying principles are very similar.

The Provincial Council Buildings were designed to be built in wood and the structural system is similar to that used at St Bartholomew's, Kaiapoi, in the same year. The timber framework is exposed on the exterior and the wall surface was probably vertical boards and battens attached to the inside of the frame. The framework forms a grid pattern which is further divided by diagonal braces which form a series of triangles and diamonds within the grid. The exposed structural framework, like those of the churches built at this time, fulfils the demands of Pugin and the Ecclesiologists that structure should be expressed "truthfully" and not disguised in any way. It is also clear from the foliations which decorate parts of the framing, and from the clearly composed arrangement of the network of uprights and braces that the structure has an ornamental function. Pugin had insisted that "all ornament should consist of enrichment of the essential construction of the building"[1] and in Mountfort's design the two functions are inseparable. We are constantly aware of the basic units of uprights and diagonal braces which form the structural system throughout, reducing the structure to its component parts in the same way that the functional differences of the building led to its division into a series of separate units. At the same time this web-like framework forms an ornamental pattern which fragments the surface of the building into a series of small bits. This tendency towards fragmentation is probably also reflected in the spaces of the interior. These must have inevitably resolved

---

1. True Principles, p.1.

into a number of small spatial units as even the largest volumes are small enough to be taken in at a glance.

Some idea of what the interior space of the Council Chamber or public hall were intended to look like can be gained from Mountfort's perspective drawing of the interior of the
(15.) Town Hall which he designed two years after the Provincial Government buildings.[2] This was also a wooden building and was similar in size to the two main halls of the Provincial Buildings. The low viewpoint of the drawing emphasises the massive size of the roof timbers which rise from slender columns against the wall, thicken and arch towards the centre where they meet the tie beams. From the upper surfaces of the curved braces, cusps sprout upwards, and above the tie beams the vertical movement is carried on by a pair of curved posts, neither queen posts nor king post, which arch outwards towards the main roof trusses. The movement of these timbers upwards has an organic energy and power which suggests the thrusting of the branches of a tree. The timber frame has a skeletal quality and the walls are apparently infill between the structural members. Ruskin identified similar qualities in Gothic architecture. There was "a stiffness analogous to that of the bones of a limb, or fibres of a tree, an elastic tension and communication of force from point to point, and....a studious expression of this throughout every visible line of the building."[3] It is the "communication of force" which Ruskin discovered in Gothic

---

2. Brittenden,W.J.A., A Dream Come True, Christchurch, 1972, p.8.

3. Ruskin, J., The Stones of Venice, V.1, Ch.VI, 74.

architecture that Mountfort aimed at expressing both in the roof timbers of the Town Hall, in the exposed framework of the Provincial Council design, and in the churches of this period as well. In the drawing, everything is subordinated to the effect of grandeur and power which the roof timbers produce; the walls are plain vertical boards, the details of the arcade at the southern end are blurred and indistinct. But what is most interesting is their effect on the people inside the building. The height of the walls, judging from photographs, was probably only ten or twelve feet. If this was the case, the occupants of the hall have been crushed to insignificance by the vastness of the roof. The exterior of the Provincial Buildings invoked the aesthetic of the picturesque but the interior of the Town Hall invokes the aesthetic of the sublime.

There is a curious feature in the drawing of the Town Hall which requires some comment. The bay window in the right foreground interrupts the curved brace at the point where it is attached to the wall. The brace is chopped short and supported on a corbel which seems inadequately supported for the weight it is required to support. The bay window, in fact, cuts into the structural framework in a quite arbritary way, indicating that Mountfort no longer wanted to be restricted by the lines of support which dominate the rest of the drawing. The problem of actually constructing the bay window probably never arose, as it does not appear in any of the photographs of the Town Hall. The Hall, as built, was a much more modest building than Mountfort's drawing suggests, and by 1864 it had been overshadowed by S.C.Farr's "new" Town Hall alongside.

During 1858 and 1859 the Town Hall was used as the meeting place of the Provincial Council.[4] However, on 8 June 1857 Mountfort and Luck were requested to prepare new plans for the Provincial Council Buildings,[5] and on 8 January 1858 construction was begun. A transitional stage in the Provincial Council design is recorded in a badly faded photograph by A.C.Barker, of one of Mountfort's drawings.[6] The drawing was probably made sometime after June, 1857. The viewpoint of the drawing is low, possibly because Mountfort did not want to emphasise the fact that the organic unity of the original design had been lost as a result of the modifications made to the design. Now a large office wing extends to the south where the public hall was originally situated, as the erection of the Town Hall in 1857 meant that this was no longer necessary. By pushing the west front out to the south, he opened up the carefully controlled axial composition of the first stage. A number of other changes have also been introduced. The exposed framework, which was such a distinctive feature of the earlier designs has disappeared, probably because it was cheaper to cover the walls from the outside with boards and battens. In order to compensate for the loss of surface interest which resulted from this change, the chimneys have been moved to the exterior walls. Pugin had advocated the use of external chimneys for expressive purposes, but characteristically he also gave practical reasons of safety

---

4. Brittenden, W.J.A., Provincial Council Chambers, cyclostyled notes, 1972, p.3.

5. Provincial Secretary's Letterbook, 8 June 1857, Canterbury Museum Library.

6. This previously unidentified photograph is contained in Barker Album, No.7, p.21 in the Canterbury Museum Library.

and the saving of space to support his argument.[7] The drawing in fact represents the stage in the design process when the coherence and unity of the first design were lost, possibly as a result of the Government pressuring Mountfort to make changes in the design. From this time on the buildings developed in the piecemeal way that typifies colonial buildings. They were to become a series of fragments but not entirely in the sense that Mountfort originally intended.

When construction finally began on the Provincial Buildings only a small part of the original complex was built. It comprised the Council Chamber, clerk and speaker's rooms and the western range of the office building, with the entrance tower. In fact it represented approximately half of the original design, which in composition it followed quite closely. Even at this stage it was probably intended to complete the buildings largely according to Mountfort's original plan. The major change in the building results from the suppression of the exposed structural framework. As has already been suggested, this was probably the result of the need to economise, and probably also a result of practical considerations as the framework was left exposed to the weather. However, it seems there was no change in Mountfort's attitude at this stage for where possible, such as in the entrance tower, the structure is left exposed. The stair tower attached to the south side is supported on foliated brackets which carry the downward thrust of the tower to the walls below. Only in the walls of the corridor, which runs round the inner courtyard, was he able to expose the timber frame in

---

7. True Principles, p.61.

the way he originally proposed. The wall reads as a network of structural ribs standing in relief from the flat timber surface behind. The framework is simpler than that in the 1855 drawing but it communicates the same feeling of tension and energy. At the same time one can see how the framework fragments the wall surface, not only by its own lines but by the network of shadows which it casts. The corridor itself acts as a buttress for the roof of the council chamber and the office block. The lines of the exposed roof beams clearly communicate the thrust of the roof, which it was necessary to absorb in exposed timber buttresses on the south wall of the council chamber.

The most important interior space is the council chamber itself. It is smaller in size than the Town Hall, but its proportions and the impression it creates are very similar. One's attention is drawn immediately to the open timber roof which has large curved braces similar to those of the Town Hall. The roof is lower, but the timbers suggest the same feeling of "tension" and "communication of force" that is found in the earlier building. A new feature here are the diagonal roof braces which form large cinquefoil shapes across the rafters. They provide longitudinal support and the cusps suggest the points of tension within the timber. They also add to the feeling of organic, plant like growth in the whole structure.

The council chamber, like the Town Hall design, also has a bay window, but here the window fills the space between the structural frame instead of breaking through it as the Town Hall window does. (The window was a latter addition, built in 1860[8].) It pushes

---

8. Taylor, pp.48-9.

out through the south wall and its full size cannot be appreciated without stepping into it as its height is obscured by the roof line of the council chamber. It forms a distinct unit of space, almost like a separate room and from the outside this impression is even clearer as the window rises above the wall line and has its own individual roof. The addition of the window is indicative of Mountfort's changing attitude to lighting. The original design had only a small number of windows and would have been rather dark, as the corridor is to this day. When it was built the windows formed a continuous range along the south wall, and after the construction of the stone additions in 1865 a pair of dormer windows were let into the north side of the roof. The rather dim interiors of Mountfort's early design may be the result of an initial over-reaction to the brightness of the New Zealand sunlight, which contrasted with the kind of light effects experienced in England. However, by the end of his first decade in New Zealand his designs show a concern with filling interiors with a much more natural light.

Before the new council chamber was in use it was decided to enlarge the buildings[9] as the functions of the Provincial Government had expanded rapidly as a result of increased population and a dramatic increase in the Provincial Revenue as a result of land sales (from £50,000 in 1857 to £93,000 in 1858). The completion of Mountfort's original plan would not have provided adequate accommodation and an entirely new plan was produced. The west front was extended to the north and the central courtyard
(21.) was enclosed along the north side by a further range of offices.

---

9. Minutes of the Executive Council, Province of Canterbury, 23 February 1859, Canterbury Museum Library.

Both in plan and elevation the extensions exhibit a clear development from the earlier buildings. The extensions are at once more unified in form, but more aggressively irregular than the earlier building. The north front has pavillion-like blocks balancing each other at either end, and the windows of upper and lower floors are now unified into bay windows which rise from ground to roof level, providing improved lighting as well. There may have been suggestions from members of the government that a more balanced and proportioned design would be more acceptable than the highly irregular early design. What Mountfort produced was quite different. The north front, which could have formed a unified block was dramatically split asunder by the stone tower which rises in its midst, pushed to the west of the centre. The tower was probably intended to act as a fire break and as a storage space for records, but Mountfort has turned it into something much more. It rises in defiance of classical notions of harmony, proportion and beauty. Summerson has described William Butterfield's "hatred of beauty" but what is more to the point is the refusal of architects like Butterfield or Mountfort to be constrained by classical conceptions of beauty. It is worth comparing Mountfort's building with Waterhouse's design for the Manchester Assize Courts, published in the Building News in 1859. There is a superficial resemblance in the use of pavillion blocks at each end, and the tower in the centre, but Waterhouse's design, in common with many comparable Gothic Revival public buildings of this period, is entirely symmetrical. Mountfort, on the other hand, avoids symmetry in a manner that can almost be described as ruthless. Furthermore, he could no longer justify the irregularity of his design on functional grounds as the new building was to form office space,

which, by its very nature suggested the provision of relatively uniform spaces.

The treatment of the timber wall surface contrasts with the rather bland, flatness of the 1858 buildings, which betray the loss of the exposed framework. The bay windows which jut forward create surface interest and the vertical lines of the weatherboards are off-set by the horizontal lines of the string courses. One also senses that behind the weatherboards, the structural framework is now composed primarily of vertical studs, rather than the diagonal braces which predominate in the earlier design. The wall surface thus becomes directly expressive of the structural system behind.

Even more interesting than the development in the treatment of the timber wall is the stonework of the tower which introduces High Victorian structural polychrome into Mountfort's work. The tower rises in alternating courses of a red volcanic stone from Bank's Penninsula, and the greyish-white trachyte porphry from Hoon Hay, giving a characteristically High Victorian, "streaky bacon" appearance. The origin of structural polychrome in Mountfort's work goes back to his essay on the ecclesiastical buildings of Northamptonshire written about 1846. In this essay he described the Chapel and Bede House at Higham Ferrers, [10] where

> two tints....of stone (are) employed....the grey white and the red stone. The masonry is carried up in regular courses all round the

---

10. See Pevsner, N. The Buildings of England: Northamptonshire, Harmondsworth, 1973, p.258 and plate 70.

> building. There are three courses of the grey stone and then a narrow course of the red which is carried round the buttresses and all projections so that it has a very original and ribbonlike appearance. [11]

Hitchcock has pointed out the importance of the 13th and 14th century buildings in Northamptonshire as precedents for the High Victorian use of polychrome [12] and it is clear that Mountfort followed these buildings in his tower. The way in which he used the polychrome is also significant. By laying it in horizontal courses he emphasised the structural properties of stone and in this he was following the example, not only of his medieval precedents but also that of his contemporary G.E.Street. Street summed up the way in which polychrome should be used in a lecture given to the Worcester Diocesan Architectural Association in 1855.[13]

> The whole building is composed of a succession of horizontal layers one over the other. The horizontal line is therefore eminently the line of construction, and if in using the materials of your walls you so dispose a coloured material as to lead the eye in any other than this line, your coloured material at once ceases to give the idea of anything constructional, i.e. being an integral part of the fabric.

Mountfort was surely familiar with Street's ideas either through his articles in architectural journals, or from his book Brick and Marble in the Middle Ages which was published in 1855. The deployment of the stone in a way that emphasised construction is the equivalent in that material of the expression of the timber frame by exposing in on the outer wall surface. It also fragments

---

11. Mountfort, Remarks Descriptive ...p.76.

12. Hitchcock, H.R., Early Victorian Architecture in Britain, London, 1954, V.1, p.579.

13. Quoted by Muthesius, p.95.

the stone wall surface in the same way that the timber framework fragments the wooden wall. The effect at Higham Ferrers, as Mountfort described it, was "ribbonlike" and polychrome, as Peter Collins has pointed out, allowed architects to break up the form of the building, the element which was axiomatic in classical architectural theory.[14] In classical architecture since the 16th century at least, colour very seldom appeared on the exterior of a building as it was feared that it would break up the "visual integrity" of the building. Both polychromy and irregularity, therefore, work against the classical notion of beauty. There is a further aspect of Mountfort's use of polychromy which links it with the earlier timber designs, and this connection is found in Ruskin. Ruskin compared the "stratification of the wall" to the stratification of mountains and described these layers as "epochs in the walls existence."[15] The wall should grow organically "like the root, stalk and bell of a flower" or like the wall of a mountain. The sense of natural growth, of life and energy which is found in the timber buildings is equally applicable to the stone buildings. The metaphor, however, has changed from a tree to a mountain.

The rapid growth of the Canterbury economy which had begun in 1858, continued in the early years of the 1860s. The Provincial revenue increased from £106,000 in 1860 to £365,000 in 1864 and reached a peak for the decade of £639,000 in 1866. The spirit of adventure and optimism which pervaded the settlement in these years encouraged the colonists to commence building the

---

14. Collins, p.111.

15. Ruskin, V.1, IV, 5.

railway tunnel through the Port Hills to Lyttelton, the most ambitious engineering undertaking in the early history of New Zealand. The same spirit of optimism lead the Provincial Government to request Mountfort to prepare plans for a new Council Chamber and Refreshment Rooms, in March, 1864.[16] The new buildings, to be completed by March, 1865, were conceived on a grander scale than any previous buildings in the colony. It was specified that the new buildings should be in stone and a range of good building stone had been discovered locally. These discoveries probably owed something to the geological explorations connected with the Lyttelton Tunnel project, as well as the presence of the German geologist, Julius von Haast, who was engaged by the Provincial Government in 1860. The presence of William Brassington, the stone mason and sculptor, in Christchurch, also meant that a craftsman was on hand who was able to execute the more elaborate stonework in the design.

The new council chamber extended the western front
(17,22.) to the south and the refreshment rooms occupied the position of the old clerk and speaker's rooms on the east front. These timber buildings, including the octagonal stair tower, were moved northwards and attached to the east end of the north front. The new stone buildings represent a further phase in Mountfort's stylistic development, extending and developing the ideas that appeared in the earlier works. These buildings do not sit on a flat site in the way the earlier ones do, but rather grow out of the uneven ground plane. The site slopes towards the river to the east and south, but instead of forming a level area on which to situate the new buildings, as he had done with the foundation

---

16. Provincial Secretary's Letterbook, 23 March 1864, Canterbury Museum Library.

for Holy Trinity, Lyttelton, the walls follow the contour of the land. Thus, the buttresses on the council chamber's east wall increase in height as the grounddrops away towards its southern
(23.) end, and the south wall of the refreshment rooms steps down with the slope of the river bank. This tendency towards shaping the building to the contour of the ground is extended even to the west wall of the council chamber where the lower part of the wall steps outwards to meet the ground. This feature was explained just after the buildings were completed as a practical necessity as the buttresses extended towards a main thoroughfare, but it is as much a formal device as a functional one. One gains the impression that the buildings have grown out of the site in the way that a hill rises out of a flat plain.

The stone buttresses of the council chamber, which seem to grow out of the ground and form part of the wall, exhibit Mountfort's continuing concern with the direct expression of the structural system. However, in this design we find elements which are not strictly structural but which are expressive of structural forces The slender black porphry detached columns which rise on the inside walls of the council chamber along the line of the external buttresses, function in this way. The thrust from the principle roof trusses which these columns appear to support is absorbed by the external buttresses, but the columns serve as an emblematic expression of that thrust. A rather whimsical use of this device is found beneath the oriel window in the refreshment rooms. The base of the window is corbeled into the wall and the additional thrust is absorbed by a small buttress below. However, a detached column,

too slender to function in a structural sense, rises from the buttresses to the base of the window. Like the detached columns of the council chamber, it also functions as an emblem of structural force.

The ground plan also shows a development of Mountfort's ideas. The plan of the council chamber is comparatively straight forward, the chamber occupying the main central block and the clerk and speaker's rooms forming a low annex at the southern end. The refreshment rooms reveal a much more complex approach. Within a comparatively strict, L-shaped ground plan, Mountfort arranged a complicated series of spaces, which included large dining and smoking rooms, accommodation for the speaker and residential quarters for a caretaker. The spatial arrangement is very complex and can only be appreciated by direct experience. The rooms are arranged on four different levels, with rooms and staircases cutting up the space in a kind of three dimensional irregularity that is new in Mountfort's work.

This aspect of the design is extended in the treatment of the wall surfaces. The wall itself is built of courses of rubble stone from the Halswell quarries, and in the use of small and irregular sized stones Mountfort was following the advice of Pugin.[17] Pugin argued that the rough stone wall with irregular joints was stronger than modern walls with smooth blocks and regular joints, but there was an aesthetic advantage as well, as the random placement of the stones formed a neutral area which didnot

---

17. True Principles, p.19.

interfere with the lines of the building. The wall surface became a continuous neutral ground which could be subdivided according to the arrangement of the interior. The arrangement of the windows in the new buildings reflects these ideas which had already found a tentative expression in the Halswell Church design the year before. The council chamber has a continuous range of windows which suggest the large open space of the main hall. The windows at the south end differ from the rest as they reflect the interior arrangement of the reporters' gallery on the inside. It is in the walls of the refreshment rooms that the free arrangement of the windows becomes most pronounced, as a result of the complicated nature of the interior spaces. On the south wall, three trefoil headed windows step downwards with the
(24.) decent of the passage inside, while in the north and west elevations, the apparently random arrangement of the windows again reflects the requirements of the interior spaces. The extent to which Mountfort was prepared to exploit the irregular placement of the openings in the wall surface is indicated by the door which opens on the river front of the refreshment rooms. The doorway has been pushed as close to the edge of the space as possible, so that its hood mould is actually sliced off by the projection of the end wall. There is in this small detail, a clear assertion of the architect's right to arrange the building's form exactly as he wants and not according to any predetermined rules of taste. The irregular arrangement extends beyond the placement of the windows and doors to the treatment of the string course. In the 1859 extensions the string courses were simply horizontal bands, but now they have become active and move over the wall surface. They form continuous bands that encircle the building, rising over windows to form hood moulds or falling to form sill moulds, or

moving in an apparently random fashion but always enlivening and fragmenting the wall surface. They contrast with the texture and colour of the wall and this heightens the impression that they are attached merely to the wall surface and are thus free to move in any direction whatever. Mountfort's use of the string course at this stage is both functional, as it is related to the interior arrangement of the building, and decorative. It may owe something to the chapter on mouldings in the Brandons' An Analysis of Gothic Architecture, which contains the following passage on string courses:

> Sometimes rising abruptly in graduated and rectangular heights; sometimes carried over a doorway or round an arch; now dying into a wall; now as it were passing into some interrupting projection, and nothing baffled by it, re-appearing on the other side; now starting aloof into a window label and playing the most fantastic tricks before it again descends; a stringcourse at once relieves naked masonry and binds into a whole the seemingly detached portions of the rambling and irregular construction.[18]

While the wall surface itself has been fragmented by every means at the architect's disposal, including the use of downpipes curving across the wall, the wall itself has become an element that can be formed into almost any shape in response to the arrangement of the interior spaces. The gables of the refreshment rooms do not rise in unbroken lines but are broken up so that the existence of separate spaces in the interior can be expressed. Each interior space has its own separate roof which is in turn reflected by the wall rising to form yet another gable. The design of the refreshment rooms takes Mountfort's principle, "to pile together, to insert, to add with any degree of fearless irregularity whatever," to its logical conclusion. The irregularity

---

18. V.1, p.56.

which ten years earlier had been primarily manifested in the ground plan has now permeated the whole of the buildings fabric. Now even the gables of the council chamber, which one might have expected to have remained unbroken because of the single space below, has been disrupted by the pinnacle like chimneys which thrust through them, aggressively proclaiming the secular nature of the building.

The composition of the council chamber cannot be read from a single viewpoint, as the building presents constantly changing profiles and arrangements of forms as one's viewpoint changes. It can only be appreciated as a combination of a series of differing views, each different in character. This characteristic is enhanced by the buildings superb site, which may well have influenced the design. Poised on the top of a slope it is bounded by streets on two sides and by the river on a third so that uninterrupted views can be gained from three sides. Nor can the council chamber be viewed in terms of ordered Renaissance perspective, for when the west side is viewed from the south, the recession of the buttresses is suddenly interrupted by the main entrance, which rises much higher than the buttresses and effectively foreshortens the wall. The east wall, also viewed from the south, has exactly the opposite effect; the southernmost buttresses, because of the fall in the ground level, are considerably higher than those at the north end, and as a result the perspective is artificially elongated. The combination of foreshortening and elongation creates a visual tension which threatens to pull the whole building out of shape.

The overall impression of irregularity and visual restlessness of the exterior is heightened by the use of structural

polychromy. Its use is more restrained than in the 1859 tower and the horizontal bands do not recur. It is still used in a structural way however, for the quoins, as well as for weatherings and other mouldings. The light colour and smooth surfaces of the quoins and weatherings provide good reflective surfaces and as a result the edges of the buttresses and the corners of the building itself tend to dissolve in the sunlight, the buttresses merging with the wall surface and the lines of the building becoming blurred. Unfortunately the effect of the polychrome can no longer be judged from the building itself as the stone has been reduced to a uniform grey by years of city grime. However, the original appearance of the building can still be recreated from the evidence of Barker's remarkable early photographs.

This is fortunately not the case with the interior of the (25.)council chamber, which has remained virtually uneffected by the passage of time. Our impression of the interior is already conditioned before we enter the building, for the main entrance is through a massive arch which rises thirty-six feet above the ground, the same height as the interior of the council chamber. The arch creates the expectation of a high open space within, but as we pass through the main doors, this impression is contradicted by the comparatively low timber roof of the entrance lobby. Glimpses of the chamber are seen through the screen which separates the lobby from the hall, but the full spatial effect is only experienced as one moves into the hall itself. The space opens up on all sides; above, in front and behind. It is difficult at first to ascertain the precise limits of this space, as the

roof seems to hover at an undetermined distance above the walls. Unlike Mountfort's earlier timber roofs, this one forms an enclosed arched ceiling, but this does not read as a continuous surface. The main ribs of the ceiling are sprung from different levels, and the spaces between the ribs are filled with boards which form a series of furrows between the ridges. The walls and ceiling thus merge together and the roof itself, as a writer in The Press observed when the building was opened, "produces an endless variety of lines from any point of view, and light and shade is obtained in a manner surprising, considering the simplicity of the arrangement."[19] The "endless variety" of the roof is enhanced by the painting which accentuates the tendency towards fragmentation. The decorative scheme was designed by Mountfort as were the encoustic tile panels which cover the lower wall surfaces. These panels are more geometrical in design and more abstract than the ceiling design which is based on natural forms. The panels follow Pugin's recommendations that floor or wall decorations should use flat patterns that preserve the flatness of their ground plane, with the pattern produced only by contrasting colours.[20] They create the same visual effect as the painted ceiling, vibrating before the eye with a kind of restless energy. A degree of visual relief is found in the creamy coloured ashlar walls above these panels, and across the ends of the chamber. Even these surfaces are broken up, although to a lesser degree. A pair of dark horizontal bands runs through the side walls and above the windows a string course weaves its

---

19. The Press, 22 November 1865.

20. True Principles, p.30.

way from one end of the hall to the other. The string courses which move across the end walls, no longer have any functional role and serve simply as a means of activating the plain wall surface. The windows of both the side and end walls are surrounded by this area of sandstone ashlar. They provide a soft, even illumination which is enhanced by the warm glow of the ashlar, and which allows the decorative system of walls and ceiling to be appreciated. The overall effect is of lightness and space.

The interior of the council chamber was not designed to be viewed from a single point, as was ideally the case for a classically proportioned room, and as one moves about the chamber the complex surface patterns come to life and dance before the eye. The overall effect of the interior is essentially the same as that which one gains from the exterior, although richer in treatment and brightly coloured. The vitality of the ceaseless movement Mountfort created evokes Blake's aphorism, "Energy is eternal delight." The trend towards increasing irregularity, the more and more complex arrangement of forms, and the continued fragmentation of the wall surface, reaches its culmination in the 1865 portion of the Provincial Council Chambers, and when a change occurred in Mountfort's work during the 1870s, it inaugurated a move towards greater simplicity and repose. The restlessness and energy of the 1865 buildings suggests Mountfort's sense of a vital force within the natural world, but it also suggests the feelings of unrest and disquietude which pervade the 19th century. As he does so often, Ruskin provides an insight into what the 19th century saw in Gothic architecture, and it is the characteristic of "changefulness" that seems to be of central importance to Mountfort at this stage. Ruskin describes it as "that strange

disquietude of the Gothic spirit....that restlessness of the dreaming mind, that wanders hither and thither among the niches and flickers feverishly around the pinnacles and frets and fades in labyriathine knots and shadows along wall and roof, and yet is not satisfied nor shall be satisfied."[21] Beneath Mountfort's quiet and mild exterior, therewas an imaginative restlessness that seems to have compelled him to activate every surface and to charge every inch of his building with tension and energy. Ruskin had found these qualities in the paintings of Turner, and it is possible to see a parallel between the work of the architect and the painter. Both share the same fascination in the dissolution of form and the power and movement of nature. We need look at only one detail from the Provincial Council Buildings, the rose window in the north wall of the Council Chamber, where the stained glass whirls in a spiral motion, to discover a parallel for the swirling vortices of Turner's paintings.

There are some other aspects of the Provincial Council Building that should be mentioned. The use of a wide range of building stones in the construction of the council chamber has a significance that goes beyond the colouristic effects created by the contrasting hues. The stone was quarried from several different locations; from the Weka Pass in North Canterbury, from Governor's Bay on Bank's Penninsula, from Halswell and Hoon Hay near Christchurch. The building thus evoked associations of different parts of the province and embodied within its fabric the geological resources of the province, which von Haast was exploring at that time. There are other associational characteristics of

---

21. Ruskin, V.2, VI, 40.

the building that are linked more directly with its function as the seat of Provincial Government. The corbels which support the ribs of the council chamber roof, are carved in the likenesses of illustrious Victorians, among then Queen Victoria herself, Florence Nightingale, General Gordon and David Livingstone.[22] These worthies embody the qualities of leadership, strength, courage and compassion that should guide the politicians who were governing Canterbury. This concern with the moral probity of the government is made more explicit in the texts which are inscribed on the stained glass windows. They include lines such as "In the hand of God is the prosperity of man" and Pope's "Party is the madness of many for the gain of the few". The building in fact was intended to have a morally improving effect on those who used it, constantly reminding them of the ancient origin of their form of government, the exemplary lives of their outstanding contemporaries and of the moral truths which should guide their decisions. The concern with morality which forms an essential part of Victorian architectural theory, has now become explicit in the building itself. The belief that only good men can produce good architecture has been modified; now the building is actively influencing the men who use it.

When we look at the Provincial Council Buildings as a whole, the contrast between the early and the later sections is very noticeable. As we have seen, the buildings were changed and expanded continually during the ten years since Mountfort produced his first design. The stone council chamber and refreshment rooms were the first buildings Mountfort designed which were not restricted

---

22. Taylor, p.25.

by a serious lack of funds, or in the materials he could use. The bouyancy of the Canterbury economy at this time and the spirit of optimism and adventure that this engendered, almost certainly had an effect on the design of the buildings. However, the boldness and exuberance of forms, the use of structural polychrome, and the very free use of Gothic precedents all suggest Mountfort's increasing familiarity with the development of the High Victorian Movement in England. In fact, the council chamber is the first truly High Victorian building in New Zealand. The boldness and vitality of the council chamber and refreshment rooms reflects the optimism and confidence of the mid-Victorian period as a whole, as well as the particular situation in Canterbury during the early sixties. But as we have already seen the buildings have a restlessness and lack of repose which reveals the other side of the Victorian age, its anxiety and spiritual doubt. The Provincial Buildings reveal very clearly that the Canterbury colonists had not escaped the feelings of social and spiritual unrest which had lead them to found a new society in New Zealand.

Mountfort's contemporaries had watched the growth of the Provincial Buildings and saw in them a record of the province's short history. A writer in the Lyttelton Times noted that the 1858 portion of the buildings told "of the time when provincial revenues were small" while the extension of 1859 told "of a time when the provincial prosperity demanded increased accommodation".[23] The 1865 buildings represent the time when provincial prosperity had reached a peak. In this brief space of time the buildings

---

23. Lyttelton Times, 14 June 1862.

could be seen growing from childhood, to youth, to splendid maturity. The notions of organic growth and progress formed an important part of 19th century architectural theory and Gothic was regarded as the organic style, par excellence, while the Ecclesiologists had linked the development of the style with the growth of the societies which produced it.[24] The Provincial Buildings, in its organic growth as well as in its moral sense, can be regarded as more than simply a building, but as a living thing. C.R.H.Taylor said much the same thing in 1950 when he wrote "I should like to believe that the building has a soul."[25]

---

24. See Hersey, p.43.

25. Taylor, p.7.

Chapter Five

EARLY DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE, 1856-1865

The emergence of the detached house as a building type worthy of the serious consideration of architects is a development of considerable importance in the history of 19th century architecture. This development occurred initially in England where the Picturesque point of view stimulated the fashion for the detached "cottage" as a suitable habitation for members of the growing middle class, and at the same time reduced the status of the Italiante "villa" to that of a more modest suburban house.[1] The Picturesque cottage was irregular in its massing and thoroughly eclectic in its adaptation of stylistic motifs, but, as Hitchcock has pointed out, these changes did not always accompany comparable developments in planning. However, by the 1830s the Picturesque was the established mode for middle class houses in the rapidly expanding suburbs, and by 1841 it was sufficiently part of the architectural scene to be virulently attacked by Pugin in True Principles.[2] The essentially capricious nature of the Picturesque was anathema to the rigorous principles of Pugin and the Ecclesiologists, and in accordance with these principles they sought new precedents for domestic architecture in the moderate sized vernacular house of the late middle ages. Picturesque irregularity was made subservient to convenient planning, the use of local materials, which characterised the medieval examples, was encouraged, and construction had to be

---

1. Hitchcock, H.R., Architecture, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, Harmondsworth, 1971, p.353.

2. pp.63-4.

"real" and "truthful". Essentially, the arguments which were applied to church design were extended into the field of domestic architecture, and not surprisingly, the buildings which exhibited these principles were attached to churches. Of these, Pugin's Glebe Farm, Rampisham, and Butterfield's Coalpitheath vicarage are among the earliest and finest examples.

It was against this background that Mountfort approached his first domestic designs in New Zealand. Medieval English vernacular architecture had been used as late as the end of the 17th century in North America, in the settlements on the New England seaboard. Conditions in New England, where towns were small and wealth relatively evenly distributed, encouraged the use of this type of dwelling for a hundred years after it had ceased to be used in England.[3] Similar conditions in New Zealand encouraged the use of a similar kind of dwelling but there was an essential difference. Whereas the colonial architecture of New England represented a belated survival of English vernacular architecture, the construction of houses based on medieval precedents in mid-19th century New Zealand was the result of a conscious aesthetic and moral choice. In Mountfort's case, the decision to design domestic buildings in this style reflects his desire to establish in New Zealand a society based on the best aspects of the medieval past.

The earliest documented design for a domestic building by

---

3. Hitchcock, Architecture, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries p.353.

Mountfort dates from 1856. Unfortunately, although this design, for a new Government House in Auckland, is well documented, the building itself was never built, and Mountfort's plans have been lost. However, the documents provide a sufficiently clear description of the building for it to be of considerable interest. Mountfort was called to Auckland in September, 1856, to prepare a design for a new Government House, to replace William Mason's earlier design which had proved unsuitable.[4] The house was to be sited in the Government Domain, probably on or near the site of the Auckland Museum. It would have occupied one of the best sites in Auckland with a commanding view of the city and harbour. There is some indication that a decision had already been made to use the "medieval style" for the new Government House design as there exists a draft of conditions for a competition for a stone house, preferably in this style. It was possibly for this reason that Mountfort was brought from Christchurch. Whatever the case, Mountfort chose "the Domestic English pointed style" which he considered appropriate as it was emblematic of the Governor's office as the representative of the British Crown in New Zealand. Gothic, of course, was regarded as the national style of England and its use evoked associations with the long course of English history.

The house itself was to be built in the local dark red scoria with dressings of Matakana stone. Mountfort chose the

---

4. For the background to the Government House design see Stacpoole, J. William Mason, pp.56-63. The documents relating to this episode are contained in the Colonial Secretary's Letterbook in the National Archives, Wellington, I.A.1.60,1708.

Matakana stone because he thought that a lighter coloured stone would clash with the colour of the scoria walls. The wall surface was thus to be fairly uniform in colour, unlike the treatment of the stone tower of the Provincial Government Buildings a few years later, where the wall surface is fragmented by alternating bands of red and white stone. The main feature of the north front was a tower, beneath which was the main entrance. The two main blocks of the house were almost certainly arranged asymmetrically on either side of this tower. The asymmetrical arrangement of the parts of a building about a dominant vertical accent is, as Hitchcock has pointed out, a major characteristic of Victorian architecture, and this arrangement recurs throughout Mountfort's work.[5] The main entrance opened into a large hall which rose the full height of the building with an open timber roof and a lantern above. The drawing room, dining room and study opened off the hall, and a staircase ascended on two sides to open into an arcaded gallery, off which the bedrooms were situated. This arrangement is almost identical to that used by Pugin at the Grange, Ramsgate, built in 1843.[6] Pugin's use of the hall as a "central core of communication" as Hitchcock described it, represented an important innovation in domestic design, and was to play an important role later in the century. Mountfort probably learnt of this arrangement through his association with Carpenter, and introduced it in his first major design in New Zealand. The use of the prospect tower to provide views over the city and to the sea may also have been influenced by the similar feature at the Grange.

---

5. Hitchcock, Early Victorian Architecture, V1, p.28.

6. See Stanton, P., Pugin, London, 1971, p.166.

The planning of the remainder of the house also reflects the current trends in domestic design. The dining room and drawing room have sliding doors between them, a feature that had become increasingly common since the turn of the century. The differing functions of the various rooms are also clearly defined, and there is a clear distinction made between the more public portions of the house, which form a distinct unit grouped around the hall, and the service area of kitchen, servants quarters and storerooms.

An important feature of the design was the arcades which ran round the drawing room and dining room, to which access was gained by French doors. The arcade was enclosed by a low wall with provision for flower boxes in which creepers could be planted and trained over the piers and arches. Mountfort hoped the arcades would be "an appropriate and pleasing adaption of the style to the exigencies of the climate which require protection from the heat more than at home." The arcades have an additional importance, for like the prospect tower and the bay window of the drawing room, they allow the natural surroundings to be enjoyed to the full. They represent the trend, stimulated by the Romantic movement and the Picturesque point of view, to break up the distinction between the interior of the house and the exterior setting. The house in fact, turns outwards towards its natural surroundings.

The interior of the house was to be decorated in a manner that also reflected the influence of Pugin and which looked forward to the kind of interior decoration that was to be produced

by Morris and the "Firm" a few years later. The walls of the dining room, study and hall were to be lined with different varieties of native woods, arranged in panels to contrast their different colours, and the ceilings of the dining room and study were also to be paneled. The drawing room walls were to be covered with panels, filled with a flock paper, while the panels of the ceiling were to be painted with scrolls and monograms. Finally the hall and arcade were to be paved with Minton tiles and the windows of the hall and dining room glazed with Powell's quarries. The interior would have been richly coloured and patterned, while the flock papers and tiles probably followed the style of those illustrated in Pugin's True Principles. These have flat, stylized, foliated patterns created by bright, contrasting colours. Had it been built, the richness of the interior would have rivalled that of the 1865 Council Chamber. It would also have resembled the Council Chamber in another respect, for Mountfort suggested that the building should "serve as an instance of the industrial powers of the Islands combining in the construction the productions of several provinces as for instance, chimney pieces of a stone of one place, ornamental panelling from another, paving and varigated wall tiles from a third." The desire to evoke associations of various parts of the country parallels the similar approach of Deane and Woodward in the Oxford Museum, built between 1855 and 1859.[7] The architects, working in close colaboration with John Ruskin, introduced building materials from all over the British Isles. The intention was to make the Museum itself an embodiment of the natural sciences, to which its

---

7. See Hersey, pp.193-8.

collections were devoted, but the attempt to give the building an associational "life" of its own, existing independently of the people who use it, is the same as that found in Mountfort's Government House design.

Mountfort submitted his plans in January 1857 and returned to Christchurch. The plans, however, were passed on to Colonel T.R.Mould, the commander of the Royal Engineers detachment in Auckland who had also been asked to prepare a design for the new Government House. Mould wrote a memorandum on Mountfort's plans which criticised the style of the design from the basis of a rigid belief in classical symmetry. He conceeded that the building would be "picturesque in its quaintness and irregularity" but doubted if "it would be lastingly pleasing to the eye formed to observe regularity of outline." He also questioned Mountfort's ability to design a structurally sound building, having no doubt heard of the demolition of Holy Trinity only two years before, and pointed out several examples of what seemed to him structural weaknesses. In answer to Mould's criticisms, Mountfort wrote the fifteen page letter to the Colonial Secretary, which remains the major source for our knowledge of his views on architecture. Mountfort defended the structure of the building by explaining the structural principles of Gothic architecture and revealed that Mould's criticisms were inappropriate to a building of a domestic scale. He did conceed that there were some small inconveniences in the plan, but pointed out that these were easily remedied, as the design was only at the sketch plan stage, and would be elaborated if it was to be built. With few exceptions, Mountfort's letter established that Mould's criticisms were either arbitrary,

illconsidered or unjustified. In spite of this, neither Mountfort nor Mould received the commission for the new Government House and when Mountfort wrote to the Colonial Secretary two years later to enquire about his design, he was informed that there were no plans to proceed with the building. In 1865 the Government moved to Wellington and no more was heard of Mountfort's design.

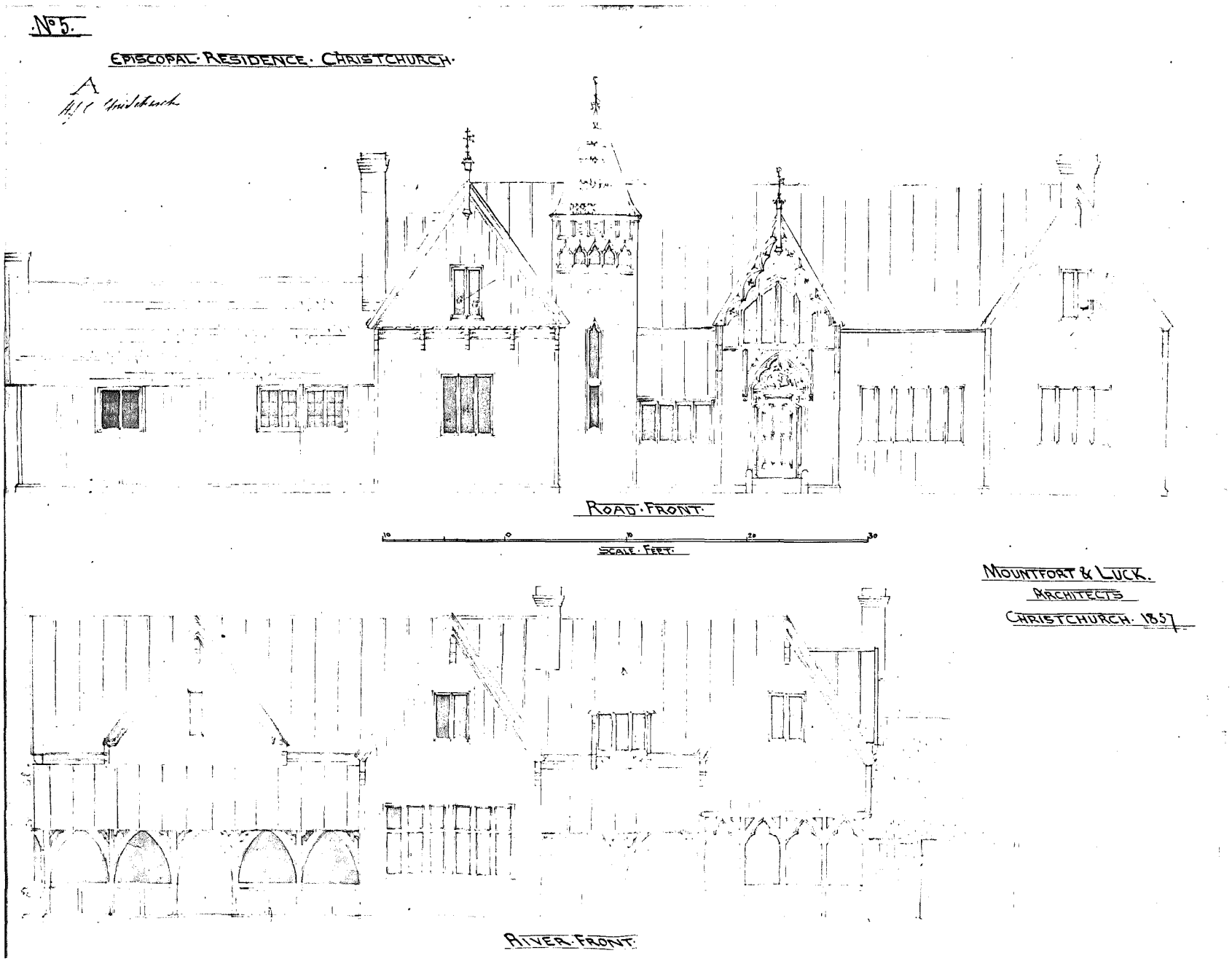
Soon after his return to Christchurch, Mountfort produced another domestic design, also intended as an official residence. Bishop Harper had arrived in Canterbury in December 1856, while Mountfort was in Auckland, and it was therefore necessary to erect a suitable episcopal residence. Unlike the Government House
(26,27.) design,, the Bishop's residence was to be built in timber, but in other respects it resembled the earlier design. The plan, although different in arrangement, reflects the same principles as the Government House design. The main entrance opens into a large hall which extends to the left and right. On the right it provides access to the more public area of the house, the drawing room, dining room and library, and on the left a group of archways open onto the staircase and a passage which leads to the domestic area of the house. The hall once more forms a central area of communications within the house. The rooms are also grouped according to their functions and the service area is housed in a clearly distinct lower wing at one end of the house.

The exterior elevations, as we would expect, follow the lines of the ground plan. A long roof line covers the central rooms but the house is broken up into a series of separate units by the rooms which project at right angles on either side of the house, forming cross-axes. There is also a clear distinction

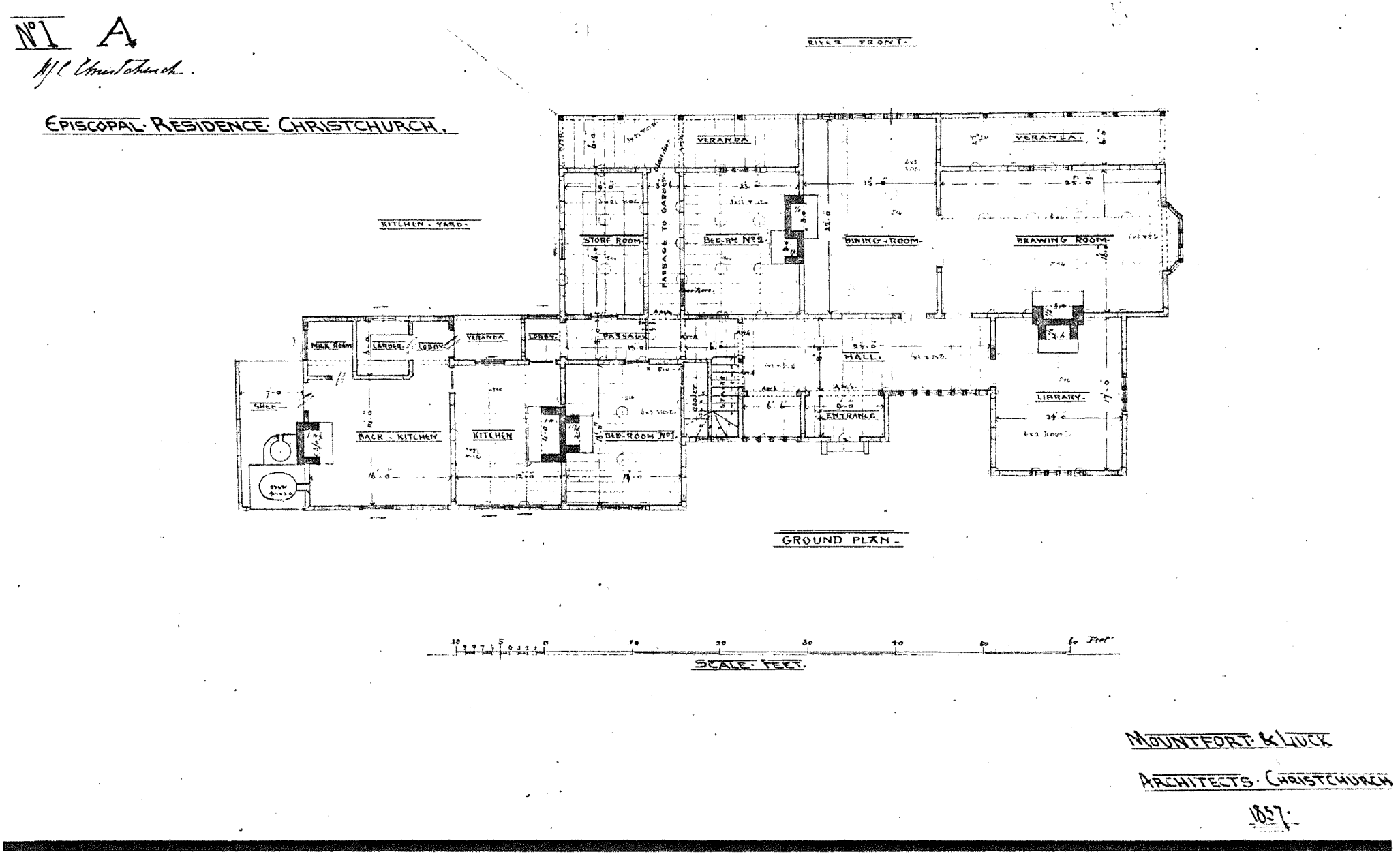
between the public and formal character of the road front, with its tower and asymmetrically placed entrance, and the private and informal quality of the river front, with its verandas which run almost the whole length of the building. The ornamentation of the entrance contrasts with the very plain treatment of the rest of the building, and the attention Mountfort gave it is characteristic of all his work. It has an important emblematic function as it establishes the character of the building from the very first impression. The treatment of the verandas is also entirely characteristic, as Mountfort changes the rhythm of the arches of each separate veranda so that each group contrasts with and compliments the others.

The overall effect of the design is very similar to the first stage of the Provincial Council Buildings, built the following year. Their structure is essentially the same and both have the same irregularity and clear differentiation of forms and functions. The stair tower of the road front is also very like the tower on the west front of the Provincial Buildings. The treatment of the elevations with a clear distinction between the formal public facade and the relaxed private facade with lean-to verandas, or corridor in the case of the Provincial Buildings, is also the same. Finally they share the rather bland treatment of the wall surface and the regular arrangement of windows which is characteristic of Mountfort's work at this time.

Like most of Mountfort's designs of the mid-fifties, the Bishop's residence was not built according to the original plan.



26. Bishopscourt, Christchurch, first design, elevations, 1857.



27. Bishopscourt, first design, plan.

(28.) The shortage of funds for building meant that Bishops court when built, was a very modest house, little bigger than many other houses in early Christchurch, and it reveals a significant change in Mountfort's approach to the design. Whereas the original design was for a large and imposing house that was appropriate to the social position of the bishop, the second design reveals the influence of contemporary English parsonages, especially those of William Butterfield. Both the social and economic conditions that prevailed in Christchurch in 1857 combined to make the status of the bishop, at least as far as it was expressed in architectural terms, similar to that of an English country parson.

The design itself is most interesting, as Mountfort has transplanted the ecclesiologically-inspired English parsonage, based on the vernacular cottage architecture of the late middle ages, to New Zealand, and adapted it to local materials and conditions. The ground plan is again asymmetrical and informal. With its L shaped hall, from which the staircase rises to the upper floor, and its close grouping of library, dining room and drawing room, it is essentially the same as a typical Butterfield parsonage plan such as that at Bamford.[8] The kitchen and service areas also form a distinct group just as they do in Butterfield's designs. The plan still bears a close relationship to the first Bishopscourt design but it is now more compact and storage space and accommodation have been reduced to a minimum. The massing of the building also suggests Butterfield's influence. The division of the roof into two ridges that run parallel to one another with one half of the building extending beyond the other is very close to Butterfield's

---

8. Reproduced in Thompson, P., William Butterfield, London, 1971, p.406.

Pollington Parsonage, which was published in The Builder in 1854. The simple form of the bay window and the almost total absence of any forms derived from Gothic also suggests the influence of Butterfield. Mountfort has again used timber frame and vertical weatherboard construction but the plainness and simplicity of its treatment forms a parallel with the same qualities found in the stone or brick construction of Butterfield's parsonages. Mountfort's use of timber distinguishes his design from its English counterparts and gives it a lightness and fragility that is quite different from the solid robustness of Butterfield's designs. The veranda, which opens into the garden from the drawing room, is an innovation which reflects Mountfort's concern with the natural setting as well as the more hospitable New Zealand climate.

Another domestic design which dates from 1857 or 1858 also reflects the influence of Butterfield's work, although it had no
(29.) connection with the church. The Union Bank of Australia in Lyttelton was built on a site overlooking the entrance of the Port Hills railway tunnel, an appropriate site as the Bank negotiated a large amount of the loan finances for the tunnel project. Like many early bank buildings in New Zealand, it provided accommodation not only for the bank itself but for the manager, Joseph Palmer, and his family.[9] The manager's residence was demolished in 1967, although the banking chamber had been removed earlier.

The Bank had the same irregular plan as Mountfort's other domestic designs, the banking chamber forming a distinct unit on the east side of the building with the domestic quarters separated

---

9. See, The History of Canterbury, V.2,p.77.

from the commercial area by a long corridor at the west end. It was built from the local red volcanic stone, and the irregular jointing of the rubble stone walls, highlighted by the light colour of the mortar, formed a crazed surface pattern which contrasted with the regular joints of the dressed stonework. The treatment of the wall surface probably reflects Pugin's taste for rubble stone construction as well as the need to economise. The visual effect, which fragments the wall into its component parts, must have delighted Mountfort. The treatment of the windows and doors is very plain and they either show no historical details or a very severe use of Early English forms. The asymmetry of the massing, the simple random masonry of the walls, the use of local materials and the increasing tendency to avoid the use of historicist detailing, are all in keeping with Butterfield's parsonage designs from the mid-fortys on. The interior of the Bank exhibited the same qualities of simplicity and truth to materials. The hall was panelled and the wooden ceilings were divided into square panels with diamond shaped motifs inside them, so that the overall impression would have been of the contrasting colours and textures of naturally treated materials.[10]

Mountfort's Union Bank design reveals an extremely important development in 19th century architecture for it adapted the characteristics which Butterfield had explored in buildings with ecclesiastical connotations, to a building which was entirely secular. What is more, it represents possibly a unique break with the orthodox classical style of 19th century bank architecture.

---

10. See Bowman, A.W., The Study of the Historical Development of Domestic Architecture in Canterbury, R.I.B.A.Thesis, 1946, p.59. Canterbury University Library.

Even more important, is that Mountfort took this step at least one, and possibly two years before Philip Webb designed the famous Red House. Built for William Morris in 1859, Red House has been recognised as the first adaptation of the ecclesiologically inspired cottage to the role of a simple, unpretentious, middle class house, and it formed the beginning of the new approach to simple domestic architecture commonly known as the "Domestic Revival".[11] The fame of Red House is due as much to its connection with William Morris, as to its architectural importance. Mountfort's Union Bank was remote from the centre of English architectural developments and his client was an obscure, although probably architecturally informed, bank manager. From the very start, Mountfort's design could not possibly exert any influence on contemporary developments in domestic design, in the way that Red House was to do. Nevertheless, Mountfort had taken a bold imaginative step which helps to place Webb's innovation in its proper perspective. It also gives some indication of Mountfort's imaginative and artistic independence of mind.

Mountfort's next house design comes as a surprise amongst the works of an architect who had so far worked exclusively within (30,32.) the revived Gothic style. The Christchurch Club was founded by a group of Canterbury farmers and run-holders who required a home in Christchurch during their visits to the town. Mountfort's plans were approved and accepted on 21 September 1859[12] but the building was not completed until 1862. Mountfort's design followed

---

11. See Pevsner, N. Pioneers of Modern Design, Harmondsworth, 1960, pp.58-60.

12. Wigram, H.F., The Story of Christchurch, New Zealand, Christchurch, 1916, pp.249-50.

what the 19th century termed the "Italian Villa Style", but the choice of "style" was probably influenced by the members of the Club. Many of the members, who included Samuel Butler during his stay in Canterbury, were classically educated English gentlemen and the Christchurch Club "quickly became a provincial shadow of its London counterparts."[13] Naturally the members wished the style of their building to follow the example of the London clubs, such as Charles Barry's Reform Club in the Italian Renaissance palazzo style. The Italian villa style which Mountfort used, probably represented a compromise between a thoroughly classical design and an irregular Gothic design which Mountfort would probably have preferred.

The Italian villa, irregular in plan, picturesque in arrangement and modest in size, was introduced into English architecture by Nash at Cronkhill in 1802, and by mid-century it had become one of the accepted modes for picturesque middle class housing. The style was praised by Downing in The Architecture
(31.) of Country Houses[14] and his remarks probably indicate why Mountfort chose this style.

> Its broad roofs, ample verandas and arcades are especially agreeable in...summers of dazzling sunshine...it is remarkable for expressing the elegant culture and variety of accomplishment of the retired citizen or man of the world...on the whole...one should say that the Italian style is one that expresses not wholly the spirit of country life, nor of town life, but something between both, and which is a mingling of both.

---

13. Jones, J., The Cradle of Erewhon: Samuel Butler in New Zealand, Austin, 1959, p.82.

14. pp.285-6.

The style was thus adapted to the New Zealand climate and expressed both the rural and urban characteristics of the Club, as well as the culture and elegance to which its members aspired. Downing also noted that this style was "capable of the most varied and irregular" treatment, a feature which certainly appealed to Mountfort. Finally, Downing's design could be built in wood "to enable those who wish to build a tasteful and picturesque dwelling at an economical price to do so, in parts of the country where other materials are dear."[15] Although Downing's design was intended for American conditions, it was just as well suited to the conditions Mountfort encountered in New Zealand. If he was unable to design a building that was Gothic, the Italian villa was clearly the next best thing.

Mountfort's design has some resemblance to that published by Downing, but Mountfort's is both more complex and more irregular. Both share the asymmetrical massing of two large blocks about the central tower, and both have the same, low pitched roofs. They also share a similar treatment of the arch over the entrance which is pierced by a series of circles. The motif was probably derived from Palladio's Villa Poiana, but Mountfort's use of it is closer to the Palladian original than Downing's. This detail suggests that Mountfort had looked closely at Palladian villas before he began his design, which represents a complete reworking of the original models. In this repsect his design differs from Downing's which is merely a picturesque adaptation of the Palladian original. These differences emerge in the treatment

---

15. p.288.

of the windows and the wall surface. Downing's design reveals an essentially symmetrical arrangement of windows, whereas Mountfort's treatment of this element breaks completely with the original Palladian model. The arcades of the lower floor have their origin in the Palladian window motif, but by arching the smaller spaces, and by re-arranging the relationship between the major and minor arches, the regularity of the original motif has been destroyed and Mountfort has introduced a constantly changing and irregular rhythm. The windows of the upper floor have only a nominal relationship to the arches below, and they form individual units as opposed to the linked series of openings in the arcades below. On the east side of the front, the central window is pushed up through the clear horizontal of the roof line, breaking up the triangle formed by the roof. The arches of the main entrance and of the arcade also have their clear geometrical shapes broken up by the curious semicircular projections on their chamfered lower edges. By this simple device, which fragments the form of the arch, Mountfort subverts the connection of these forms with classical architecture. He also uses horizontal weatherboards for the first time in this design, probably in order to compensate for the already dominant verticals of the arcades and the tower. The treatment of the wood continues Mountfort's concern with "reality" and "truthfulness" in construction and the corners, for instance, are formed by vertical posts and not the imitation wood quoins that appear in many 19th century "classical" designs built in wood.

What Mountfort did in the Christchurch Club, was to

reinterpret the Italian villa mode within the terms of his own approach to architecture, and he has imbued this essentially Picturesque mode of design with the ethical principles of Pugin and the Ecclesiologists. The relationship of the design to Mountfort's earlier works is nowhere more apparent than in the interior. He uses the central hall, with a stairway rising to an arcaded gallery above, that he had originally proposed to use in the Government House design.[16] It was his first opportunity to put this Pugin inspired "central core of communication" into practice. There is also an open timber roof with skylights above, just as he proposed in the Government House design. The decorative treatment of the woodwork carries over to the interior the same motifs which appear on the outside of the building, and as we would expect, the irregular massing of the exterior reflects the asymmetrical arrangement of the rooms inside. The exterior arcades also represent a carry-over from the Government House proposal, but here they have been extended round two sides of the building. They open the house up to the natural world surrounding it, and at the same time reduce the wall to its essential skeletal members, both considerations of importance to Mountfort.

The use of colour on the exterior of the Christchurch Club is particularly interesting. A comparison of Barker's early photographs with the present day colour scheme suggests that the original treatment has been preserved. The main wall surfaces are a light grey and the arcades and details are white. This

---

16. The hall is illustrated in Wigram, plate 32.

colour scheme is in keeping with A.J.Downing's advice on the exterior colour of country houses.[17] Downing objected to houses painted white all over as it produced a harsh glare in brilliant sunlight, and he preferred softer colours which help the building to blend with its natural surroundings, taking as an example the treatment of buildings in landscape paintings. A building should be painted in the colours of the natural materials from which houses are built; "soil, rocks, wood and the bark of trees." Therefore the colours that should be used are "soft and quiet shades called neutral tints, such as fawn, drab, grey, brown, etc....neutral tints being those drawn from nature and harmonising with her." He also remarked that facings and details should be painted in a different shade to relieve the monotony produced by a single colour. The colour scheme which Mountfort uses follows Downing's recommendations reasonably closely, and the effect of the colour contrasts is to further break up the already irregular form of the building.

The implications of Mountfort's use of colour cannot simply be confined to the Christchurch Club, for early photographs of his churches, from St Mary's Halswell in 1863, to St Mary's Parnell in 1896, all show a similar treatment of the colour scheme. In fact the specifications for St Mary's Parnell, state that the walls should be painted "a warm stone colour" and that the details and facings should be dark brown.[18] The present day practice of painting Mountfort's timber churches a uniform white, destroys

---

17. See Downing, pp.198-206.

18. Mountfort, B.W., Specification for St Mary's Parnell,1896,p.23. Diocesan Office,Auckland.

30. Christchurch Club, Christchurch, perspective view, 1859.

DESIGN XXII

VILLA IN THE ITALIAN STYLE

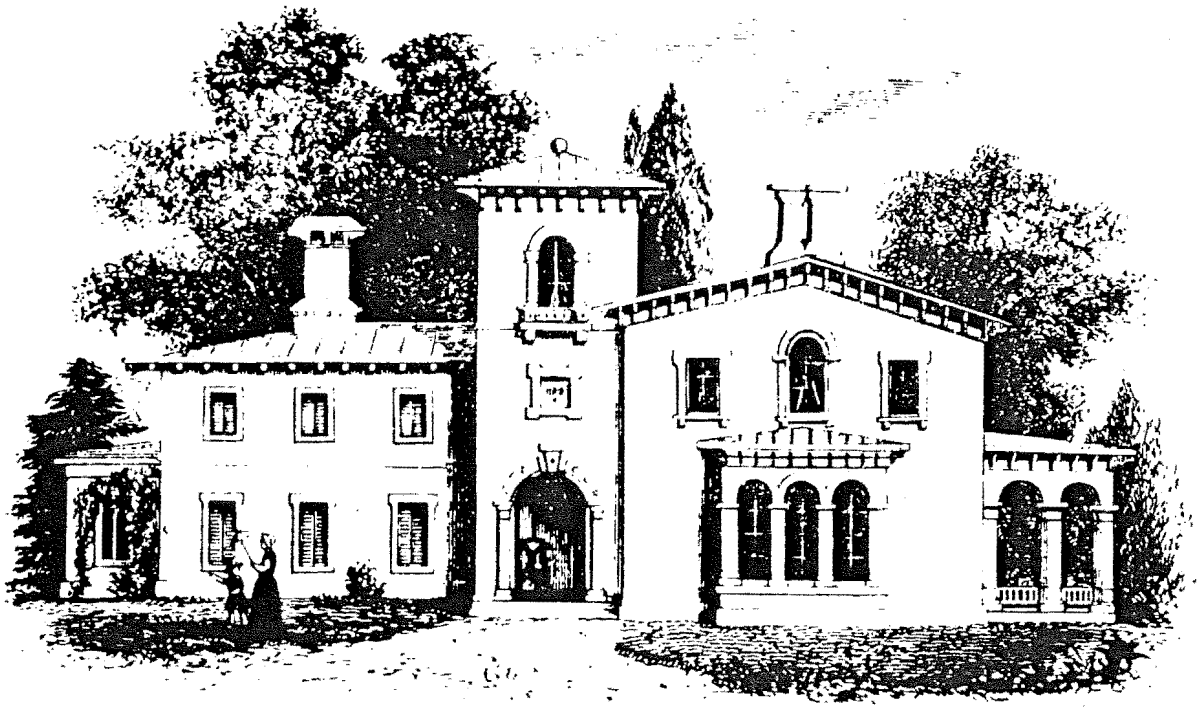
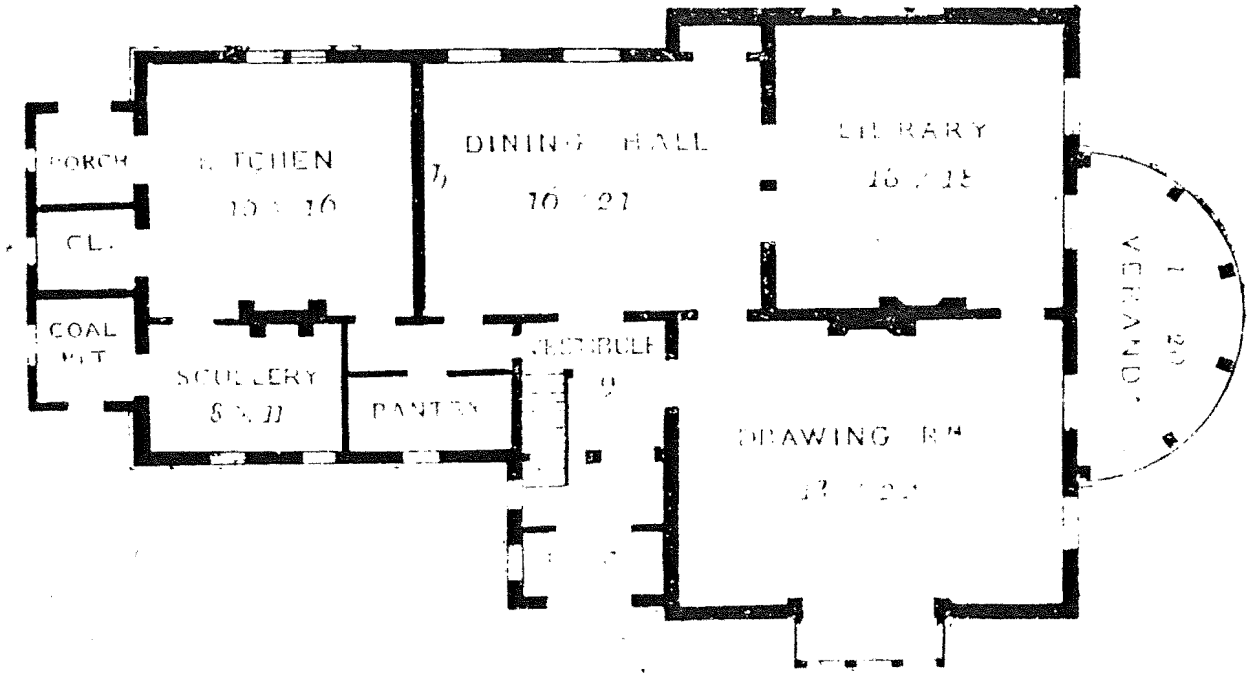


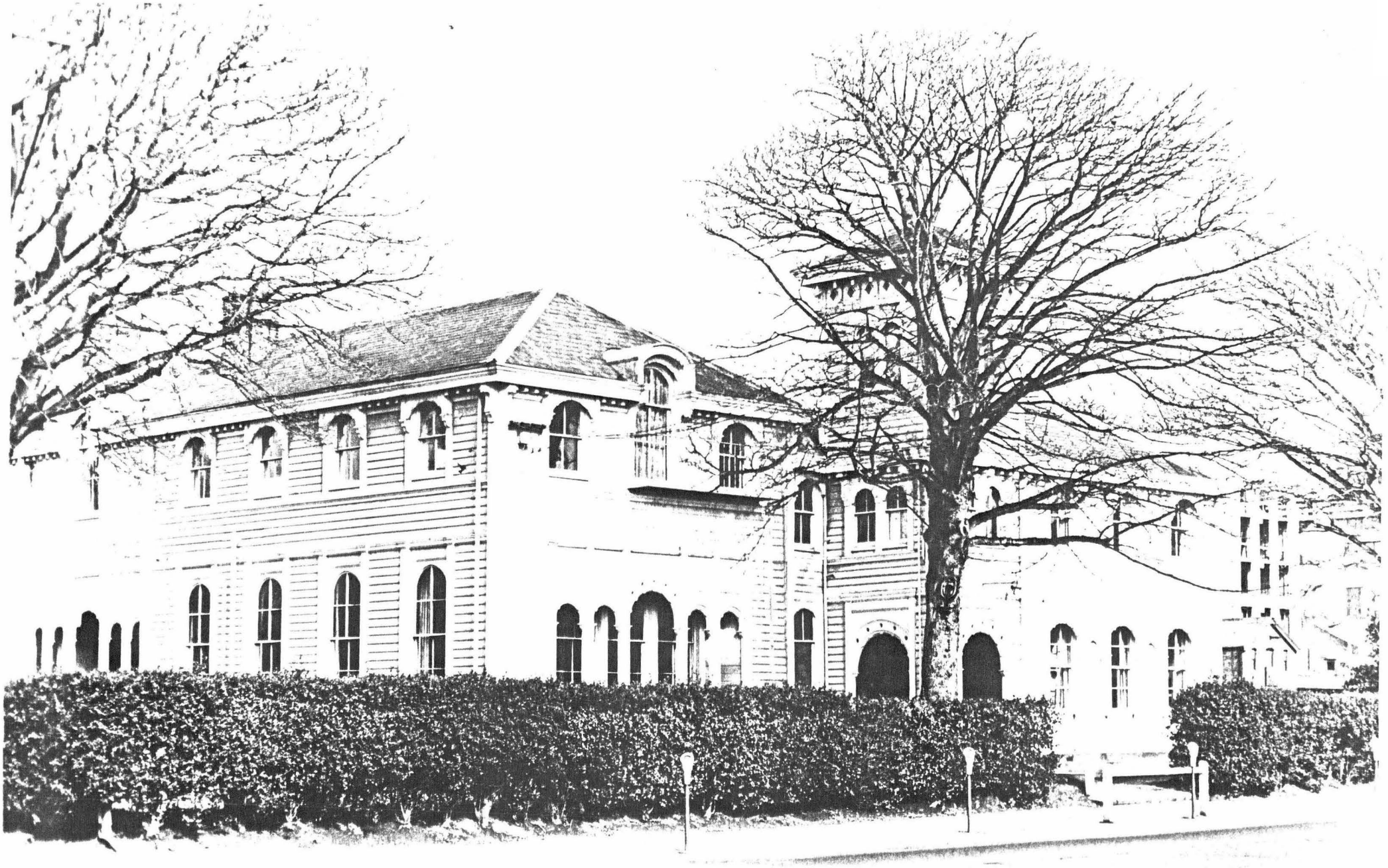
Fig. 119



PRINCIPAL FLOOR

Fig. 120

31. A.J.Downing. Design for a villa in the Italian style, 1850.



32. Christchurch Club, Worcester Street front.

the architect's original intention of making his buildings blend into nature, and instead makes them stand out in dazzling contrast with their surroundings. That this was Mountfort's intention during the fifties as well as later in his career is confirmed by the drawings for the first Bishopscourt design, which are coloured with a wash of fawn colour.

(33.) Finally, we may turn to Mountfort's own house, built, according to the recollections of his grandaughter, about 1860.[19] Although built in cob, the style of the house is similar to that of Bishopscourt and this, and the use of cob, suggest that the date is no later than 1860 and possibly a little earlier. What is immediately clear from photographs of the house (it was demolished c.1915) is that Mountfort had again adapted the ecclesiologically-inspired parsonage type to a modest private home. The house originally formed a single rectangular block, with the veranda, porch and balcony projecting from it. At some later date, an additional wing was built at right angles to the original house. The sod walls were left plain and unadorned, forming a parallel with the rubble stone walls of Butterfield's parsonage designs. The detailing of the bay window, which rises through two floors like those of the 1859 additions to the Provincial Council Buildings, is very plain, the window heads alone revealing Gothic details. The same detailing is found on the veranda arcades, and the balcony suggests the influence of the porches of Mountfort's timber churches of this period. We

---

19. Anderson, J.C., Old Christchurch in Picture and Story, Christchurch, 1949, p.409.

know almost nothing of how the interior of the house was finished, except that it had heavy wooden beams exposed in the ceilings, and a wealth of woodwork detailing.[20] The dining room walls were painted, according to family accounts, with the coats of arms associated with the Mountfort family's history, a detail that reveals Mountfort's pride in the ancient history of his family. We also know that the bookshelves throughout the house, overflowed with Mountfort's large library. Mountfort's house looks back towards the vernacular houses of the late middle ages, and it formed an expression of his Romantic medievalism and his antiquarian interests, as well as embodying the architectural principles which run through all his work. Although small in scale and built from primitive materials, the house was in every way an expression of Mountfort's character, just as Red House was an expression of the character and interests of William Morris.

The Romantic primitivism of Mountfort's house with its massive sod walls, reminds one of the Hemingford Church design, in which natural materials were used in an undisguised form. The house sits solidly on the ground, and covered in vines and creepers, it becomes very much a part of nature. The foliage which grows over the house, along with the use of verandas, and the preference for mellow colours, forms part of Mountfort's over-riding concern with the natural surroundings of his houses. It will be recalled that provision was made in the Government House design for the planting of vines and creepers to adorn the arcades. Similarly, the photograph of Bishopscourt shows creepers growing over the walls. This aspect of Mountfort's domestic designs again finds a parallel in Downing's writings. He advocated the

---

20. Ibid., p.410.

use of vines and creepers as a decorative covering for houses as they enhance the beauty of a house and can make up for the lack of architectural details that result from the need to economise.[21] Mountfort probably felt the need to provide this additional natural adornment as he was unable to use architectural ornament to any great extent because of the need to build cheaply and simply. However, these natural decorations have an added significance, for just as the verandas and bay windows open the house up to the prospect of the surrounding natural world, the vines and creepers bring living nature into the house itself. Natural growth and seasonal change thus became part of the total effect of the house.

Mountfort's domestic designs have been treated more harshly by the passage of time than either his churches or his public buildings, yet they reveal his familiarity with the latest developments in architecture just as clearly as his other designs. In fact his domestic designs reveal innovations that go beyond the achievement of his ecclesiastical or public buildings, for in New Zealand, Mountfort clearly saw the potential of the Butterfieldian parsonage for all types of domestic design before the more famous discoveries of his contemporaries in England. Mountfort's domestic works illustrate a central paradox of Victorian architecture, for while they look back to a Romantic vision of the middle ages for reassurance, the ethical principles which govern them, their move away from historicist forms and the integration of the buildings with the natural world, all look towards the discoveries of the future.

---

21. See Downing, p.206 ff.

POSTSCRIPT

In 1865 Benjamin Mountfort was forty years old, and he had over half his architectural career before him. The previous fifteen years in New Zealand had been a period of exploration and experimentation, during which he developed the ideas which he had learnt during his apprenticeship in England, and adapted them to the conditions which he found in New Zealand. By 1865 he had established a mature style, yet his later work does not remain static but continues to grow and develop. During the 1870s Mountfort consolidated the achievements of the previous decade, but towards the end of the seventies and during the eighties a late style emerges that is characterised by a spare simplicity that suggests a paring away of inessential elements. In a late work such as the Canterbury Society of Arts Gallery of 1890, Mountfort created a building which reveals no trace of Gothic forms, relying for its architectural effect on the deceptively simple treatment of its brick walls. In this design Mountfort does not look to the Gothic past for precedents, but to the industrial architecture of factories and warehouses that was the creation of the 19th century.

In the light of our present knowledge of the history of New Zealand architecture it is difficult to ascertain the influence of Mountfort's works. His church designs, certainly, were extremely influential and represented the established mode of church architecture until well into the 20th century. The influence of his secular works is harder to determine. In Christchurch, at least, his buildings could not be ignored, and his designs for Canterbury College established the architectural character of the later university buildings. The architect who came closest to

carrying on the tradition begun by Mountfort, was Samuel Hurst Seager, who also provided designs for the University as well as making a notable contribution in the field of domestic architecture in Christchurch.

By the 1950s, Mountfort's buildings had not been forgotten, but they had ceased to exert any real influence on contemporary architecture, which in New Zealand was beginning to catch up with the development of the International Style. However, from 1957 on, a distinctive style began to emerge in the work of a number of architects working in Christchurch. It appeared first in the work of Miles Warren, who had been influenced by the "New Brutalism" in Britain, but it also represented a return to ideas which were readily apparent in Mountfort's work, but which had been largely forgotten. In their use of local materials, irregular planning and massing, high open ceilings, broken roof lines, and their concern for structural expression, the Christchurch architects such as Miles Warren and Peter Beaven were not only reacting against the purist geometry of the International Style, but rediscovering the lessons that could be learnt from the buildings of their 19th century predecessors. The developments which took place in Christchurch in the late fifties and early sixties have been described as "the first clear expression of a local contemporary architecture" but this development has its roots firmly planted in the pioneering works of Benjamin Mountfort.

APPENDIX A

MOUNTFORT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARCHITECTURAL PROFESSIONALISM IN NEW ZEALAND

The modern architectural profession had its origins in the 19th century.[1] The growth of architectural professionalism was stimulated by the Gothic Revival's emphasis on the individuality of the architect, by the sudden growth of building types, and by the increasing complexity of buildings that resulted from technological innovations. During the middle years of the century "the essential characteristics (of the profession) began to crystallize: professional ethics, standard charges, accepted conditions of employment and definition of responsibility, effective training.... and a national professional association."[2]

In New Zealand, Mountfort followed these developments with interest, and he was clearly concerned with establishing architecture in New Zealand on a fully professional basis. The prominent part which he played in the foundation of the Canterbury Architectural Association in 1872 has already been mentioned,[3] but this was only the result of developments which can be traced to the 1850s. When Mountfort and Luck were appointed Provincial Architects, a "Memorandum of the terms upon which Messrs Mountfort and Luck undertake to perform the duties of Architects to the Provincial Government" was drawn up on 1 September, 1857.[4] The "Memorandum", as its title

---

1. For the growth of the architectural profession in Britain see B.Kaye, The Development of the Architectural Profession in Britain, London, 1960, and J.A.Goth ed., The Growth and Work of the R.I.B.A., London, 1934.

2. Thompson, p.58.

3. See Chapter One, p.15.

4. Canterbury Provincial Papers, Canterbury Museum Library.

suggests, lists the varying types of work which they were to carry out. For furnishing plans, specifications and superintendance of construction the architects were to receive payment of five per cent on the total outlay. The commission was that established by tradition since the 18th century. Provision was also made for work which was not carried out, and for the various other activities the architects were expected to perform. This document is significant for at a time when architectural contracts were often haphazard and ill defined Mountfort and Luck's professional position as Provincial Architects was clearly established. When in 1862 the Royal Institute of British Architects published the "Professional Practice and Charges of Architects, being those now usually and properly made" the regulations were essentially the same as those set out in the contract between Mountfort and Luck and the Provincial Government. Clearly, this contract reflected what was becoming the normal contractual relationship between architect and patron in England. The "Scale of Charges" which the Canterbury Association of Architects adopted in 1872 was in turn based on those of the R.I.B.A.[5] The formation of the Canterbury Association of Architects and the publication of a scale of charges which clearly defined rates of payment and the role and duties of the architect, reveals that in Canterbury architecture was placed on a firm professional basis from a very early date.

The organisation of architectural competitions was another

---

5. A copy of these regulations, signed by Mountfort and the three other foundation members is preserved in the office of Collins, Hunt and Loveridge, Christchurch. An expanded copy of the regulations is among the von Haast correspondence, in the Canterbury Public Library.

highly contentious issue during the 19th century, and in 1838 a committee of the R.I.B.A. was formed to consider the proper methods of administering competitions.[6] The committee reported that selection committees "do not hesitate to select a design, without suspecting in the slightest degree that they have been captivated by the meritricious allurements of the artist."[7] Mountfort was certainly familiar with these criticisms as he expressed the same sentiments when he described his plans for Government House, Auckland. He claimed to have represented the building without any assistance to the eye being sought in shape of a background, artistic shading, or colour in aid."[8] Mountfort made a detailed statement on the way in which architectural competitions should be organised when he replied to the request of the Reverend William Habens for advice on how to conduct a competition for a design for the new Trinity Congregational Church in Christchurch.[9] The advice he gave to the Reverend Habens was probably similar to the regulations governing architectural competitions which the R.I.B.A. had adopted in June 1872.[10]

That the Reverend Habens asked Mountfort for advice, and not one of the other Christchurch architects, in itself suggests that Mountfort was considered an authority on such matters. His interest in the development of architectural professionalism since his earliest years in New Zealand, and the prominent part he played in

---

6. See Gotch, p.99.
7. Ibid., p.103.
8. Mountfort and Luck to the Colonial Secretary, p.4.
9. Mountfort to Rev.W.Habens, 5 November 1872.
10. See Kaye, p.115.

the formation of the Canterbury Association of Architects, and as its first president, reveal Mountfort as the pioneer of the establishment of the modern architectural profession in this country.

APPENDIX B

A NOTE ON MOUNTFORT'S DRAWINGS

Benjamin Mountfort's architectural drawings are one of the most important sources for our knowledge of his works; they provide insights into the development of his finished works, very often they provide revealing information about the kind of buildings he wished to design but which New Zealand conditions prevented him from carrying out, and in some cases, they provide the only visual records of buildings that have long been destroyed, or which were never built. The history and the ultimate fate of these drawings, is therefore a subject of considerable importance.

On Mountfort's death in 1898, his architectural practice was continued by his son Cyril, and his plans and drawings remained in the office. Cyril Mountfort died in 1920, whereupon his widow, Mrs Emilie Mountfort, gave the plans and drawings of both father and son to David Edward Hutton, who had assisted in the office, for safe keeping and disposal.[1] In the course of the next twenty years David Hutton devoted a great deal of time and energy to the task of sorting and disposing of the plans. Often in the face of indifference or a failure to appreciate the value of the plans, he succeeded in securing homesfor them, most often in the hands of the institutions that had originally commissioned the designs. At the same time Mr Hutton made an inventory of the plans which recorded the number and nature of each group of plans and their ultimate depository.[2]

---

1. Miss K.Hutton to the author, 12 September 1975.

2. This inventory of plans, along with all the correspondence relating to the plans, is in the possession of Mr Hutton's daughter, Miss K.Hutton of Christchurch, to whom I am most grateful for permission to study these documents.

Although it has not been possible to trace all the drawings referred to in the inventory in the time available, wherever this has been possible, the information it contains has proved to be accurate. The diligence and scrupulousness which David Hutton applied to this task is of great value, for the inventory provides the key to the present whereabouts of many of Mountfort's drawings, and it gives an indication of the vast number of drawings that survived from Mountfort's office.

At present a considerable number of drawings are available for study. The largest and most important group is preserved in the Canterbury Museum. These include a large number of drawings for the Provincial Council Buildings, and for the Museum itself, those for Trinity Congregational Church, the Hemingford Church and the two drawings of Holy Trinity, Lyttelton. (Several drawings of the Provincial Council Buildings are displayed in the entrance foyer of the Council Chamber itself.) A large group of drawings, which includes both Mountfort's and Sir Gilbert Scott's drawings for Christchurch Cathedral, drawings for a number of Canterbury churches, and for Bishopscourt, is held in the Christchurch Diocesan Office. A number of plans for Canterbury University are held in the office of Collins, Hunt and Loveridge, Christchurch.

Further plans for Mountfort's church designs are in the possession of the churches concerned. The plans for St John's Cathedral, Napier, are in the Hawke's Bay Art Gallery and Museum, and those for the 1896 extensions for St Mary's, Parnell, as well as those for a proposed stone church for St Mary's dated 1886, are

in the Auckland Diocesan Office.

However, a great deal of work remains to be done in order to locate the plans and drawings which David Hutton so meticulously recorded. The inventory which he kept must form the starting point for any attempt to catalogue Mountfort's drawings. Within the scope of the present study, it has been possible only to assess the magnitude of the task involved, and no attempt has been made to form a catalogue of the drawings.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Bibliography is divided into two parts. Part One contains primarily New Zealand material relating specifically to Mountfort and his works. Part Two contains general material dealing with the Gothic Revival background.

PART ONE

I. Letters and Papers of Benjamin Mountfort

a) Royal Institute of British Architects, Library, London: Remarks Descriptive of Ecclesiastical Edifices in Northamptonshire, in, London Architectural Society Essays, v.2, 1846.

Canterbury Museum Library: Reports and Papers on Public Works to the Canterbury Provincial Council. Letters to the Superintendent of the Province of Canterbury.

National Archives, Wellington: Letters to the Governor of New Zealand concerning designs for the new Government House, Auckland, (1956-57), Colonial Secretary's Letterbook, IA1, 60/1708.

Christchurch Diocesan Office: Letters concerning the building of Christchurch Cathedral, 1863-96.

St Paul's Trinity Pacific Church, Christchurch: Letter to Rev.Harbens concerning the competition for the design of Trinity Congregational Church, 5 November, 1872.

Hawke's Bay Art Gallery and Museum: Specification of Works; St John's Church, Napier, 1886.

Auckland Diocesan Office: Specification of Works; additions to St Mary's Church, Parnell, 1896.

Mr H.V.Mountfort, Auckland: Notes on the History of the Mountfort Family, n.d. (c.1890s)

b) Some Old Precedents for Modern Church Building: a paper read before the annual meeting of the Cathedral Guild, Christchurch. Christchurch, 1879.

The Christchurch Cathedral, General Scheme for the Windows. Christchurch, 1880.

Other Times, Christchurch, 1885.

II Primary Sources

a) Documentory Material

Canterbury Museum Library: Canterbury Provincial Papers: Provincial Secretary, Outward correspondence; Secretary of Public Works, correspondence registers; Minutes of the Canterbury Provincial Executive Council.

Selfe Papers, (photocopy).

Torlesse, C.O., Journal, 1848-66.

Canterbury Society of Arts: Minute Books, 1880-90.

Christchurch Diocesan Office: Cathedral Commission Minute Book, No.2, 1871-1879.

Miss K.Hutton, Christchurch: Hutton, D.E.,Churches and Buildings Designed by B.W.Mountfort and C.J.Mountfort. (Inventory of plans). 1922-46.

b) Published Journals, Reports, etc.

Canterbury Papers; Information concerning the principles, objects, plans and proceedings of the founders of the settlement of Canterbury in New Zealand. Issued in nine parts. London, 1850-1852.

Canterbury Provincial Council. The Government Gazette of the Province of Canterbury.
Journal of Proceedings of the Provincial Council.

J... M... Thomas Robinson Woolfield's Life at Cannes and Lord Broughams First Arrival.
London, 1890.

New Zealand Government. Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives.

Reid, H. Christchurch and Suburban Directory and Postal Guide for 1884-85. Christchurch, 1884.

Ward, E. The Journal of Edward Ward, 1850-51. Christchurch, Christchurch, 1951.

c) Newspapers, Periodicals.

Christchurch Star Sun, 1935-.
Ecclesiologist, (Cambridge Camden Society), 1842-68.
Illustrated London News, 1843-.
Lyttelton Times, 1851-1935.
New Zealand Graphic, Auckland, 1890-1913.
New Zealand Institute of Architects Journal, Wellington, 1911-.
The Press, Christchurch, 1861-.
Royal Institute of British Architects, Transactions; Papers; Journal; London, 1842.
Weekly Press, Christchurch, 1865-1928.

Secondary Sources

a) Theses, typescripts, etc.

Averis, M. et.al. The Canterbury Provincial Government Buildings: A report on their history and Construction. Auckland University, 1969.

Bowman, A.W. The Study of the Development of Domestic Architecture in Canterbury, New Zealand. R.I.B.A. thesis, 1941, Canterbury University Library.

Brittenden, W.J.A. Provincial Council Chambers. Cyclostyled Notes, 1972.

Evans, E.A. St Mary's Church, Parnell, Auckland. Report prepared for the New Zealand Historic Places Trust, typescript, 1975.

Greenaway, R.L.N. Henry Selfe Selfe and the Origins and Early Development of Canterbury. M.A., Canterbury University, 1972.

Hendry, J.A. Provincial Council Chambers: The Architecture. Cyclostyled notes, 1972.

McDonald, G.R. Dictionary of Canterbury Biography, Card Index. Canterbury Museum Library.

Mountfort, J.M. Letter to Peter Beaven about B.W.Mountfort. 25 November 1969.

Pascoe, P. The Study of the Early Buildings in the Canterbury Settlement of New Zealand erected by the early Pilgrims. R.I.B.A. thesis, 1935. Canterbury University Library.

Sheppard, F.G.F. Notes and newspaper clippings on B.W.Mountfort. Auckland University Architecture School Library.

Walden, H.R. A Study of Church Architecture with Special Emphasis on the Development of Anglican Church Architecture in Canterbury, New Zealand. B.Arch., Auckland University, 1961.

New Zealand Anglican Church Architecture. 1814-1963. M.Arch., Auckland University, 1964.

b) Books, Pamphlets, etc.

Alington, Margaret. Frederick Thatcher and St Paul's. Wellington, 1965.

Anderson, J.C. Old Christchurch in Picture and Story. Christchurch, 1949.

Anon. A Short History of the Church of the Good Shepherd, Christchurch, New Zealand. Christchurch, n.d., c.1926.

Brittenden, W.J.A. A Dream Come True: The Christchurch Town Hall. Christchurch, 1970.

Bruce, A.Selwyn. The Early Days of Canterbury: A Miscellaneous Collection of Interesting Facts Dealing with the Settlement's first thirty years of Colonisation. Christchurch, 1932.

Canterbury Provincial Buildings Board. The Canterbury Provincial Government Buildings. Christchurch, 1972.

Carrington, C.E. John Robert Godley of Canterbury. Christchurch, 1950.

Clarke, B.F.L. Anglican Cathedrals Outside the British Isles. London. 1958.

Collins, J.K. A Century of Architecture. Christchurch, 1965.

Cresswell, Douglas. Canterbury Tales. Christchurch, 1951.

Cyclopedia of New Zealand: v.2. Auckland. Christchurch, 1902.

v.3. Canterbury. Christchurch, 1903.

v.6. Taranaki, Hawke's Bay, Wellington. Christchurch, 1908.

Evans, John H. Southern See: The Anglican Diocese of Dunedin, New Zealand. Dunedin, 1968.

Fox, F.J.A. et.al A Short History of St Mark's Church, Opawa. Christchurch, 1965.

Gardner, W.J., Beardsley, E.T., Carter, T.E. A History of the University of Canterbury, 1873-1973. Christchurch, 1973.

Hendry, J.A. and Mair, A.J. Homes of the Pioneers. Christchurch, 1968.

More Homes of the Pioneers and Other Buildings. Christchurch, 1974.

Hight, J. and Candy, A.M.F. A Short History of Canterbury College. Christchurch, 1927.

Hight, J. et.al.eds. A History of Canterbury, 3v. Christchurch, 1957 - 1971.

Johnson, J. The Story of Lyttelton, 1849-1949. Lyttelton, 1952.

Jones, Joseph. The Cradle of Erewhon: Samuel Butler in New Zealand. Austin, 1959.

Keey, R.B. To Him Be The Glory: The Story of Trinity Congregational Church, Christchurch. Christchurch, 1974.

Knight, C.R. The Selwyn Churches of Auckland. Wellington, 1972.

Lamb, R.C. Street Corner. Christchurch, 1967.

Lock, E.B. The Anglican Church in Oxford and Cust. Christchurch, 1965.

McDonald, G.R. The Christchurch Club, A History. Christchurch, 1956.

McKenzie, G.M. The History of Christchurch Cathedral, New Zealand. Christchurch, 1931.

McLintock, A.H., ed. The Encyclopedia of New Zealand. Wellington, 1966.

Moore, C.W.S. Northern Approaches. Dunedin, 1958.

Mountfort, C.L. The House of Mountfort. n.p., n.d.

Parr, Stephen. Canterbury Pilgrimage: The First Hundred Years of the Church of England in Canterbury, New Zealand. Christchurch, 1951.

Scholfield, G.H., ed. A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Wellington, 1940.

Stacpoole, John and Beaven, Peter. New Zealand Art: Architecture 1820-1970. Wellington, 1972.

Stacpoole, John. William Mason, The First New Zealand Architect. Auckland, 1971.

Colonial Architecture in New Zealand. (forthcoming).

Taylor,C.R.H. The Gothic Beauties and History of the Canterbury Provincial Buildings. Third ed., Christchurch, 1950.

Thompson, C. The History of St Micheal and All Angels. Christchurch, 1971.

Turner, John B. Nineteenth Century New Zealand Photographs. New Plymouth, 1970.

von Haast, H.F. The Life and Times of Sir Julius von Haast. Wellington, 1948.

Warren, D. Some Canterbury Churches, Christchurch, 1957.

Wigram, H.F. The Story of Christchurch, New Zealand. Christchurch, 1916.

c) Articles

Hill, Martin. "New Zealand Architecture, Five, The New Colonial Style (2), Gothic Revival", Education, v.25, No.5, 1975, pp.28-30.

Pascoe, P. 'Houses', Making New Zealand, v.2, No.20. 'Public Buildings', Making New Zealand, v.2, No.21, Wellington, 1940.

Pevsner, N. 'Architecture in New Zealand', Journal of the New Zealand Institute of Architects, v.5, No.10, November, 1958, pp.257-261.

Seager, S.Hurst "Architectural Art in New Zealand", Journal of the R.I.B.A., Third Series, v.3, No.19, 29 September, 1900, pp.481-491.

"The Provincial Council Buildings: Part One, Their Historical and Architectural Value; Part Two, The Architect, His Environment and His Work", The City Beautiful, 10 January 1926, pp.11-18 and 10 March 1926, pp.10-16.

Simpson, Helen M. "The Canterbury Provincial Buildings", Art in New Zealand, v.1, No.2, December, 1928, pp.95-102.

PART TWO

Primary Sources

Brandon, Raphael and J.Arthur. An Analysis of Gothic Architecture, 2v. London, 1847.

Parish Churches; being Perspective Views of English Ecclesiastical Structures. London, 1848.

Open Timber Roofs of the Middle Ages. London, 1849.

Carlyle, Thomas. Selected Writings, ed A.Shelston. Harmondsworth, 1971.

Downing, A.J. The Architecture of Country Houses. New York, 1850.

Eastlake, Charles L. A History of the Gothic Revival, ed. J.Mordaunt Crock. Leicester, 1970.

Hopkins, Gerard Manley. Poems and Prose, ed. W.H.Gardner, Harmondsworth, 1963.

Pugin, A.W.N. Contrasts; or, A Parallel Between the Noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries and Similar Buildings of the Present Day; shewing the Present Decay of Taste. Reprint, Leicester, 1969.

The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture. London, 1841.

An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England. London, 1843.

Rickman, T. An Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of English Architecture. London, 1819.

Ruskin, John. The Seven Lamps of Architecture, Everyman ed. London, n.d.

The Stones of Venice, 3v., Everyman ed. London, 1907.

Secondary Sources

Ackerman, James S. Palladio, Harmondsworth, 1966.

Betjeman, John. First and Last Loves. London, 1952.

Clarke, B.F.L. Church Builders of the Nineteenth Century. rev.ed., London, 1969.

Clark, Kenneth. The Gothic Revival: An Essay in the History of Taste. Harmondsworth, 1964.

Collins, Peter. Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture, 1750-1950. London, 1965.

Crook, J.Mordaunt. Victorian Architecture: A Visual Anthology. London, 1971.

Ferriday, P., ed. Victorian Architecture. London, 1964.

Frankl, Paul. The Gothic: Literary Sources and Interpretations through Eight Centuries. Princeton, 1960.

Gothic Architecture. Harmondsworth, 1962.

Goodhart-Rendel, H.S. English Architecture Since the Regency. London, 1953.

Gotch, J.A., ed. The Growth and Work of the R.I.B.A. London, 1934.

Hersey, George L. High Victorian Gothic: A Study in Associationism. Baltimore, 1972.

Hitchcock, Henry-Russell. Early Victorian Architecture in Britain. 2v. London, 1954.

Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Harmondsworth, 1971.

Houghton, Walter E. The Victorian Frame of Mind. Yale, 1957.

Jordan, Robert Furneaux. Victorian Architecture. Harmondsworth, 1966.

Kaye, B. The Development of the Architectural Profession in Britain: a sociological study. London, 1960.

Muthesius, Stefan. The High Victorian Movement in Architecture 1850-1870. London, 1972.

Pevsner, N. The Buildings of England: Northamptonshire. Harmondsworth, 1973.

Pioneers of Modern Design. Harmondsworth, 1960.

Some Architectural Writers of the Nineteenth Century. Oxford, 1972.

Pierson, William H. American Buildings and Their Architects: Colonial and Neo-classical Styles. New York, 1970.

Scully, Vincent. American Architecture and Urbanism. London, 1969.

"Romantic Rationalism and the Expression of Structure in Wood: Downing, Wheeler, Gardner and the 'Stick Style', 1840-1876," Art Bulletin v.35, 1953, pp.121-42.

Stanton, Phoebe, The Gothic Revival and American Church Architecture, 1840-56. Baltimore, 1968.

Pugin, London, 1971.

Summerson, John. Architecture in Britain, 1530-1830. Harmondsworth, 1970.

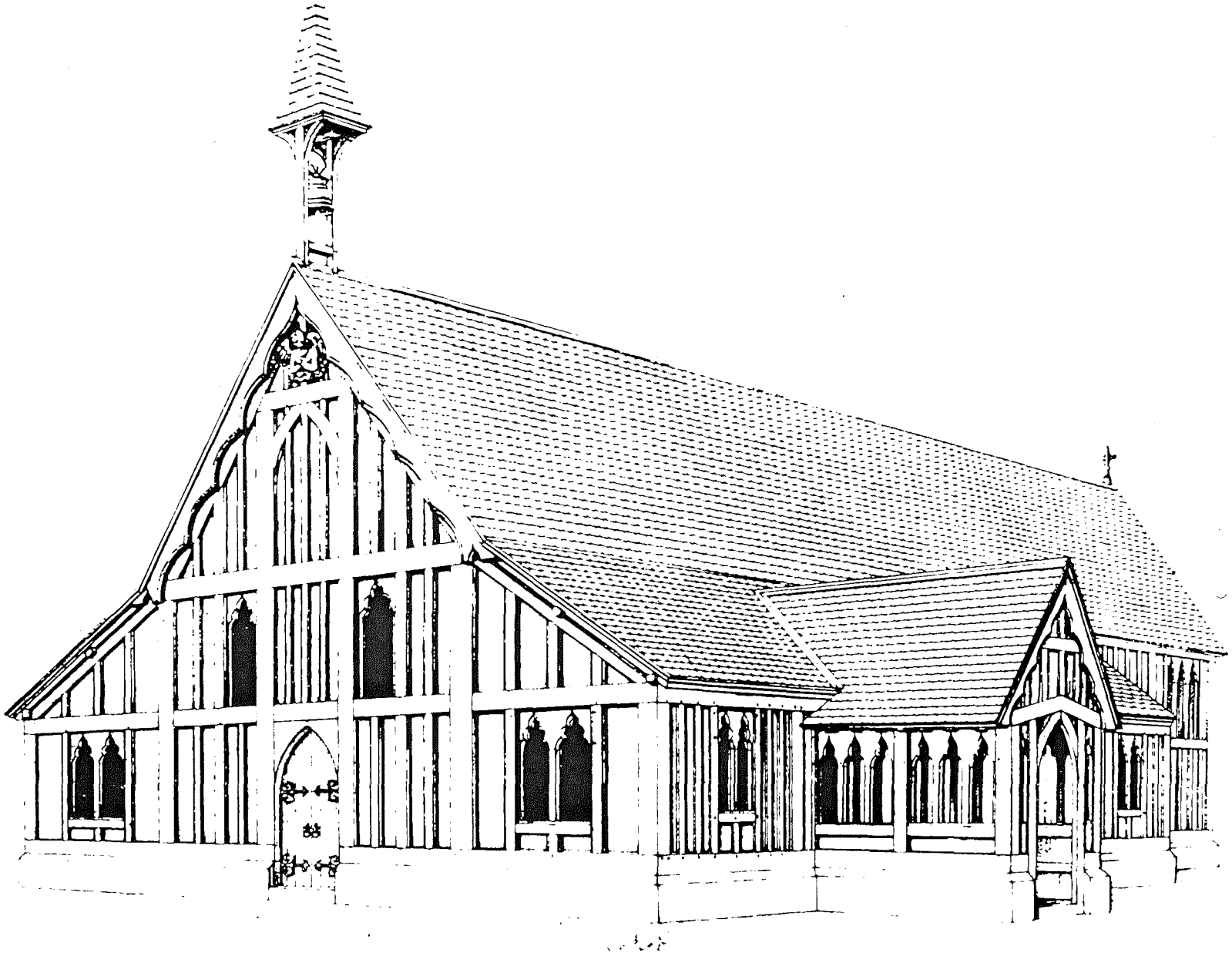
Heavenly Mansions and Other Essays on Architecture. London, 1947.

Victorian Architecture: Four Studies in Evaluation. New York, 1970.

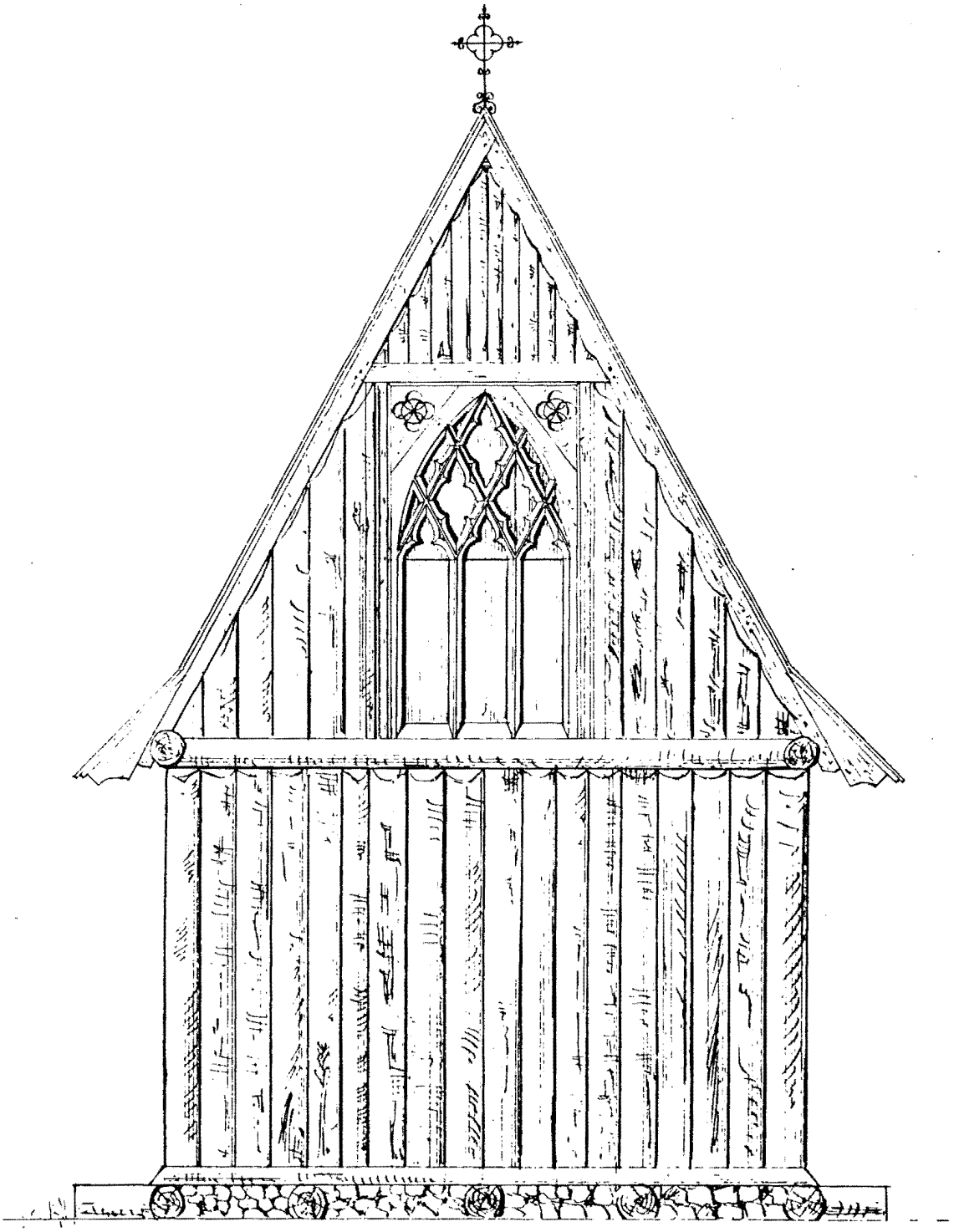
Concerning Architecture, Essays on Architectural Writers and Writings presented to N.Pevsner, ed. London, 1968.

Thompson, Paul. William Butterfield, London, 1971.

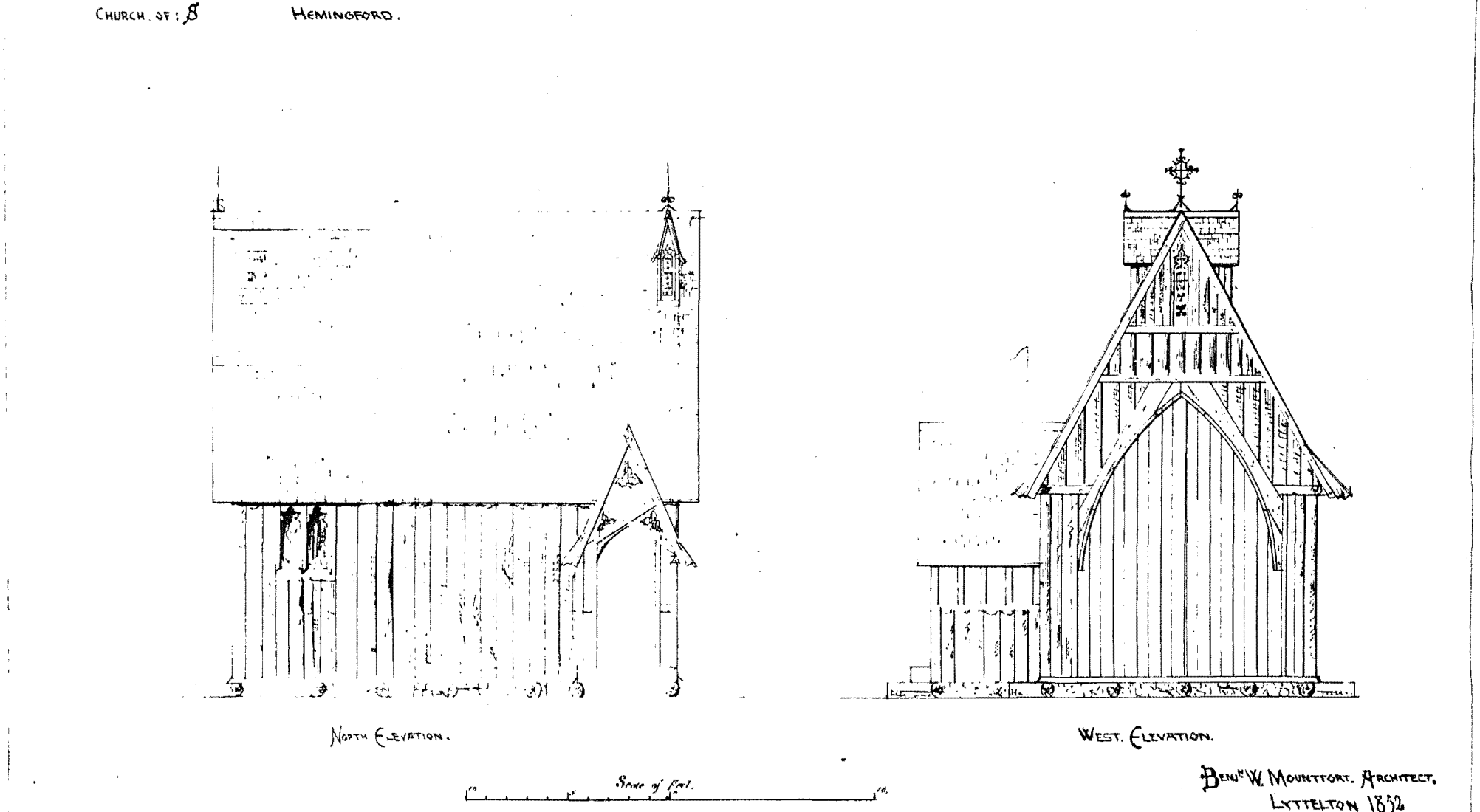
White, James F. The Cambridge Movement, the Ecclesiologists and the Gothic Revival. Cambridge, 1962.



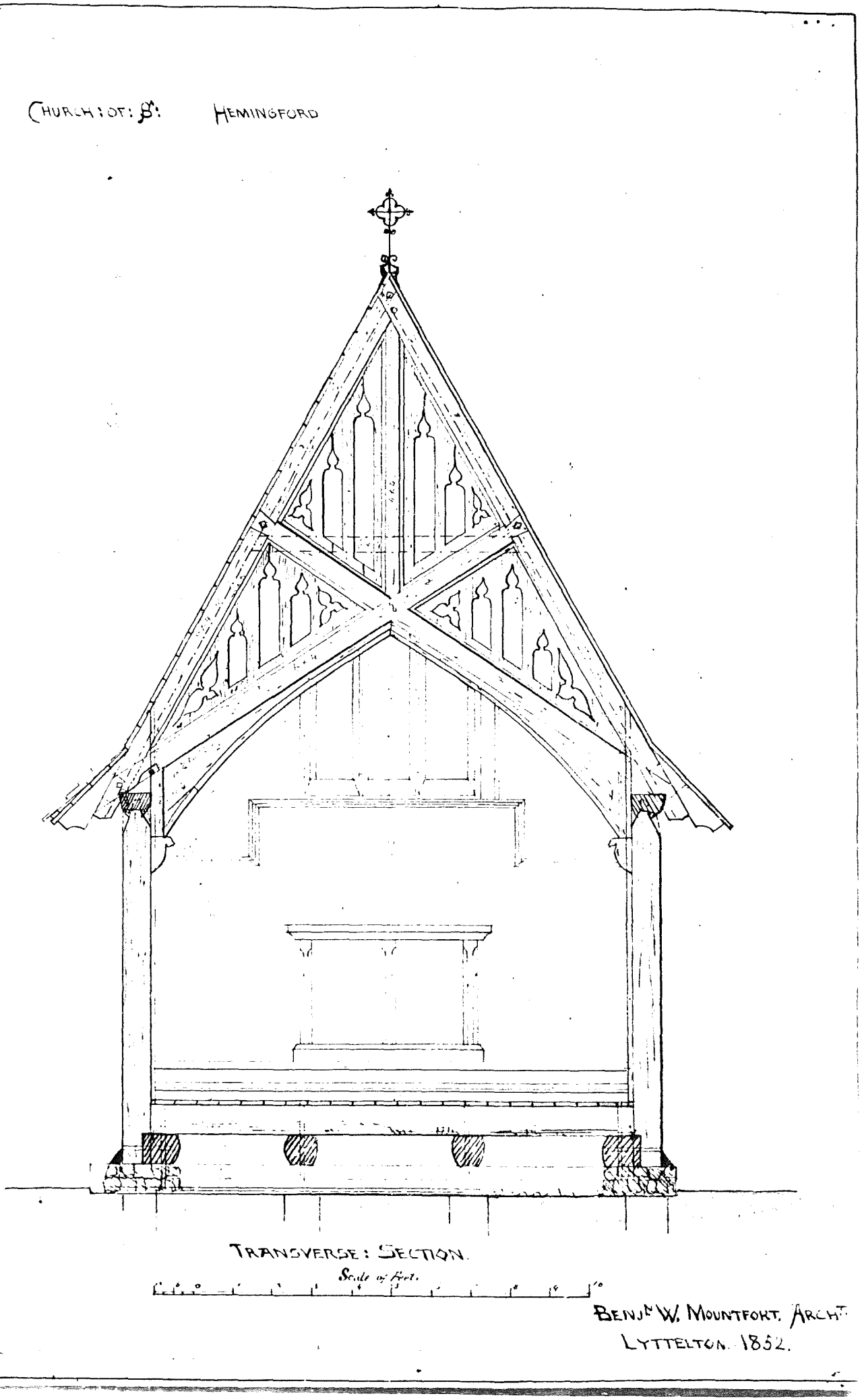
1. Richard Carpenter. Wooden Church for Tristan da Acunha, perspective view, 1850.



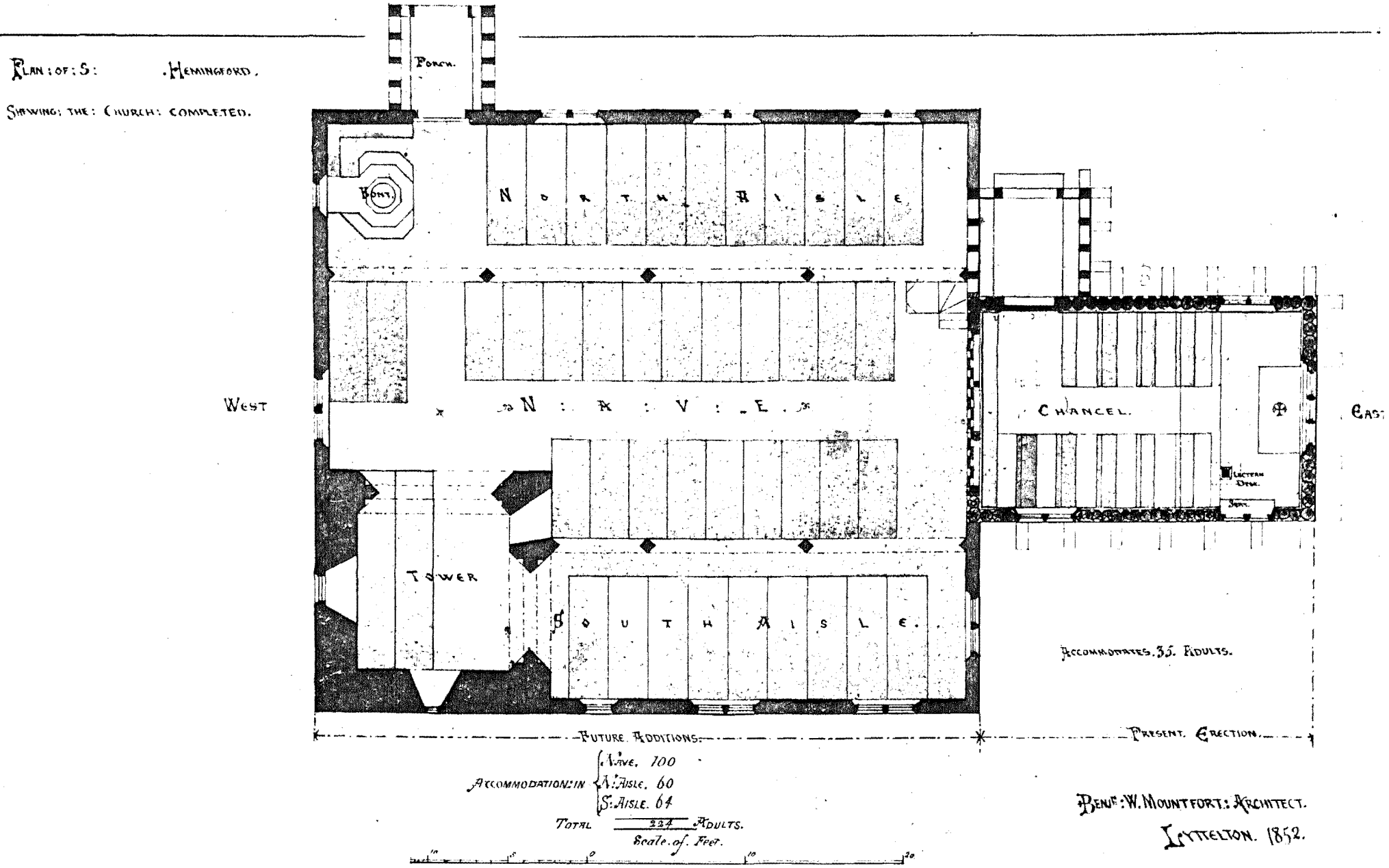
2. Hemingford Church, east elevation, 1852.



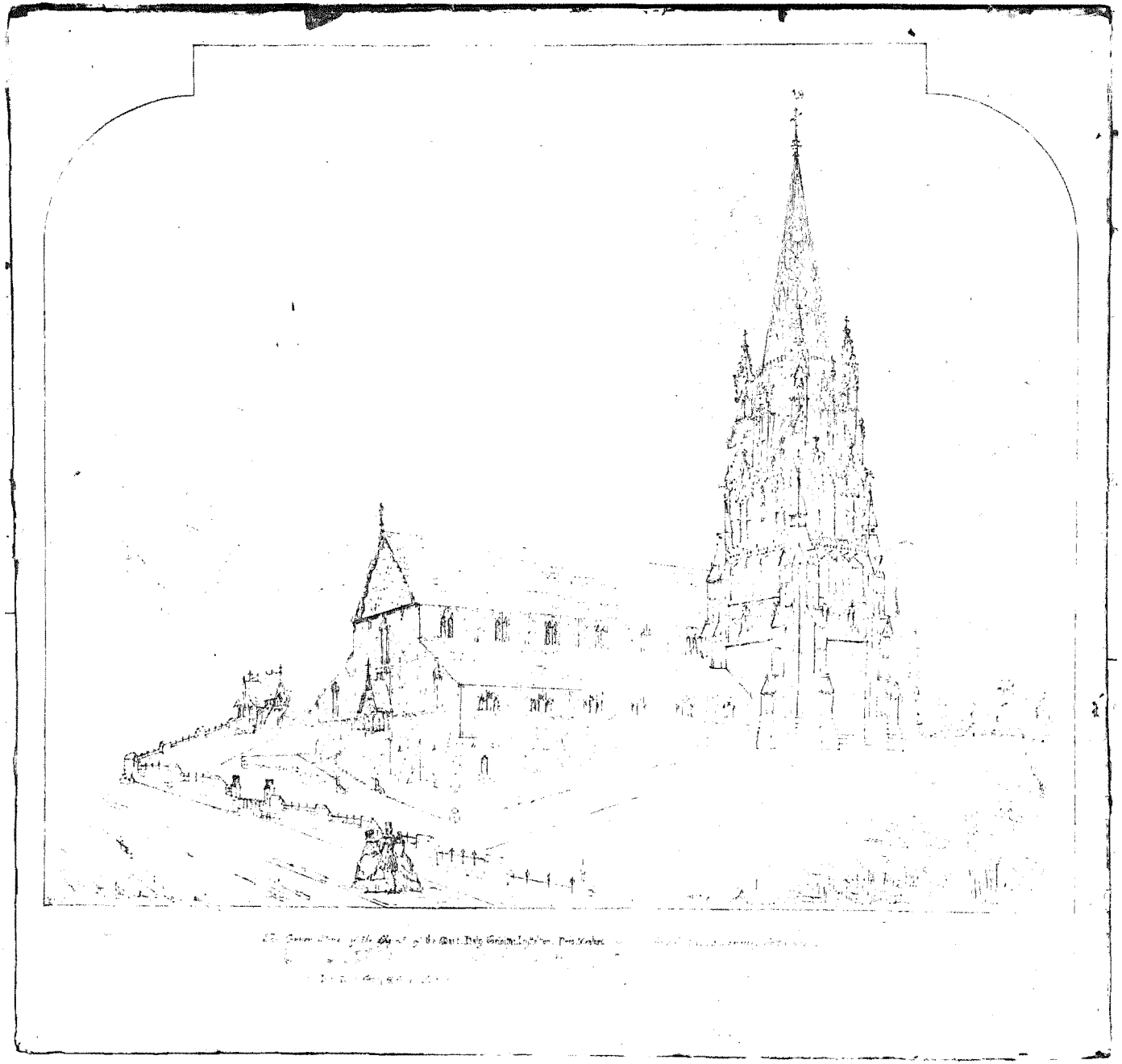
3. Hemingford Church, north and west elevations.



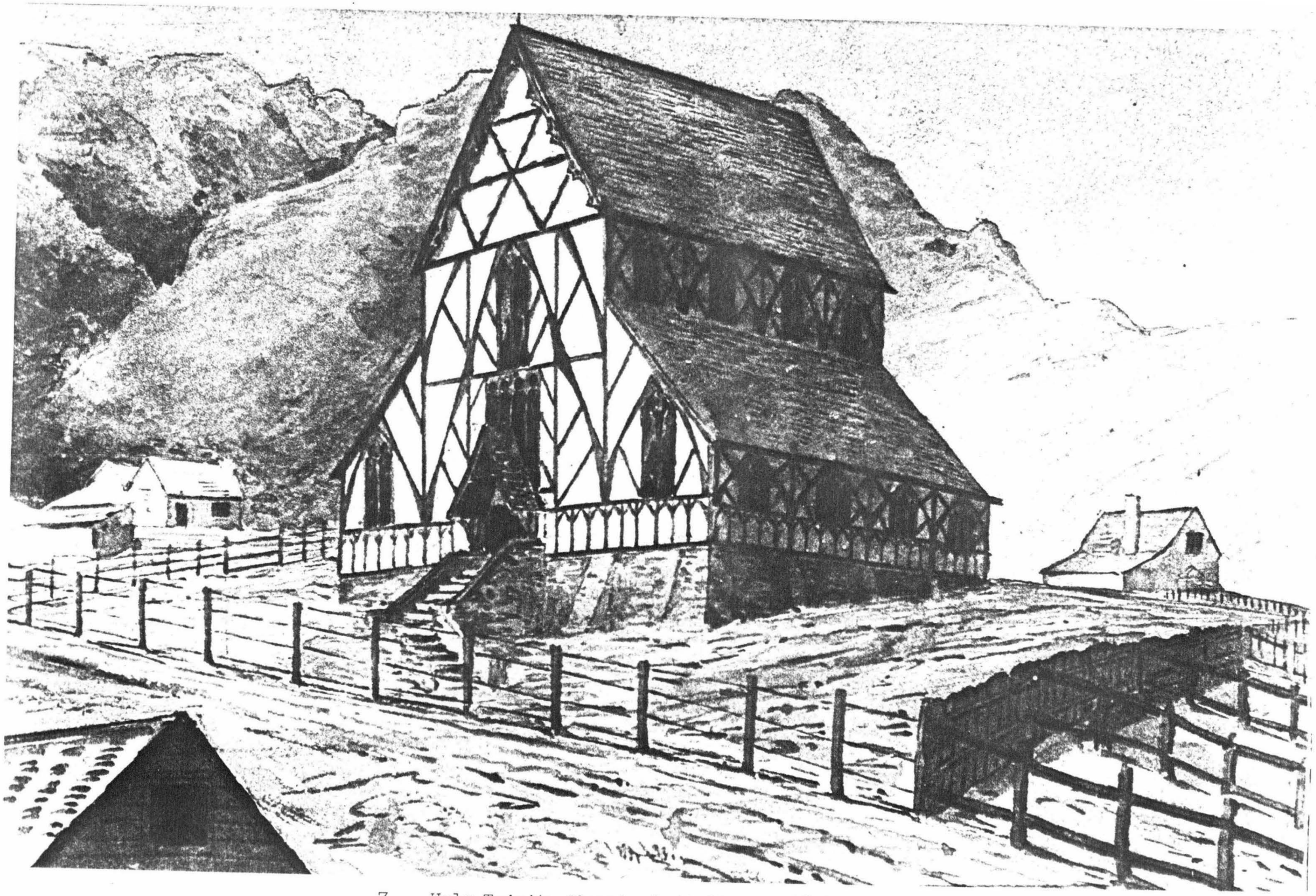
4. Hemingford Church, transverse section.



5. Hemingford Church, plan.

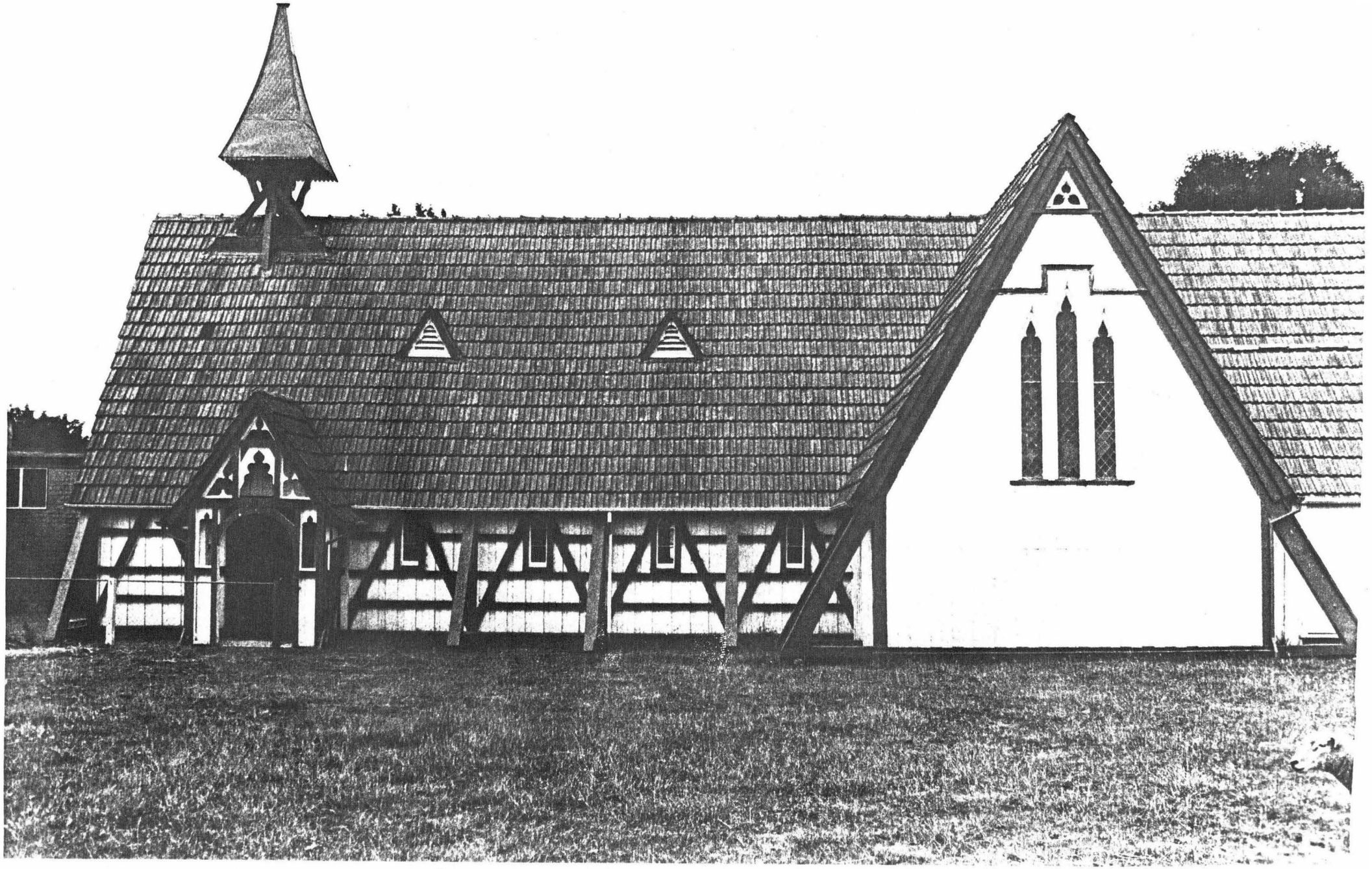


6. Holy Trinity Church, Lyttelton, perspective view, 1852.

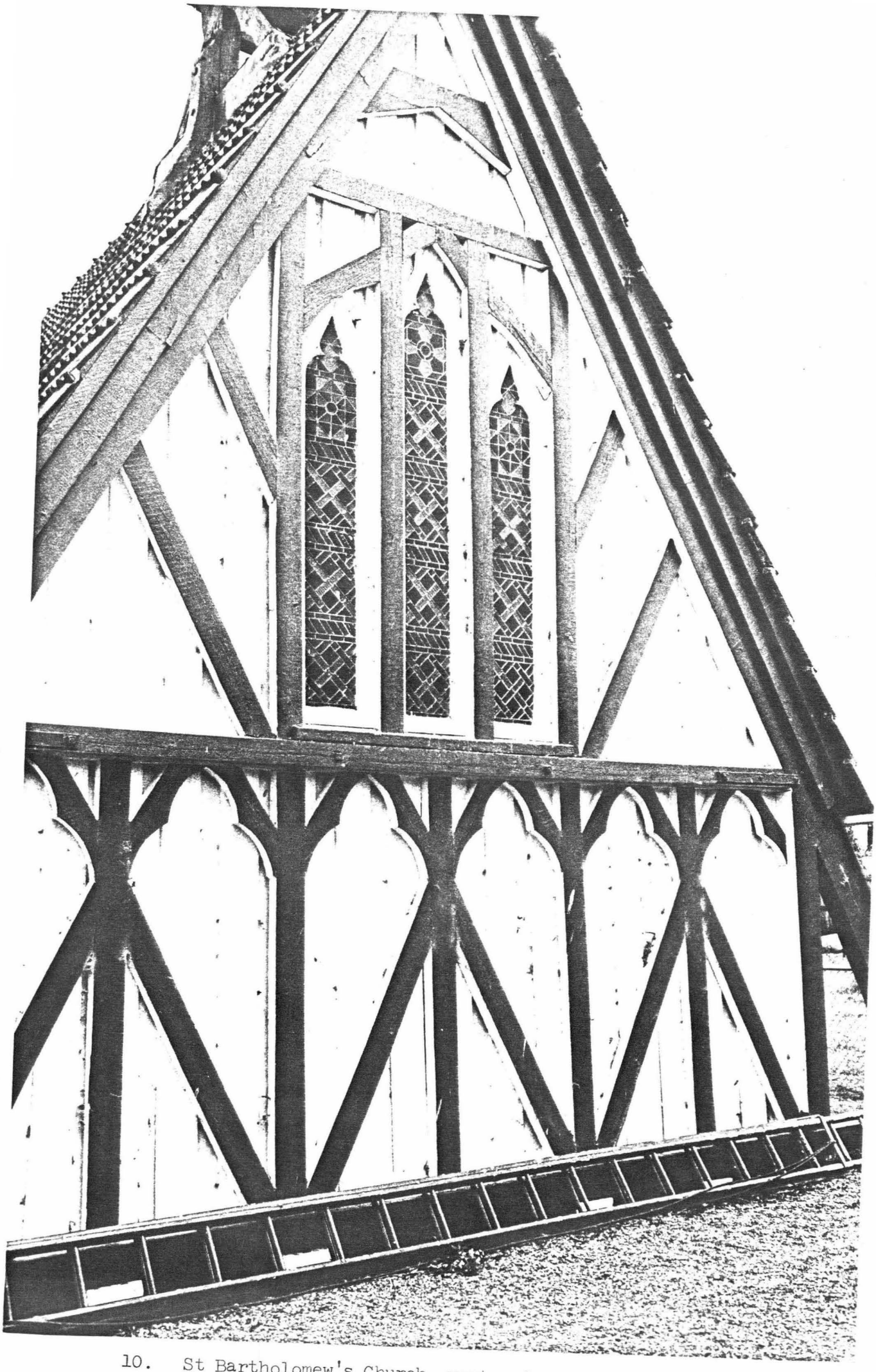


7. Holy Trinity Church, Lyttelton, c.1853.

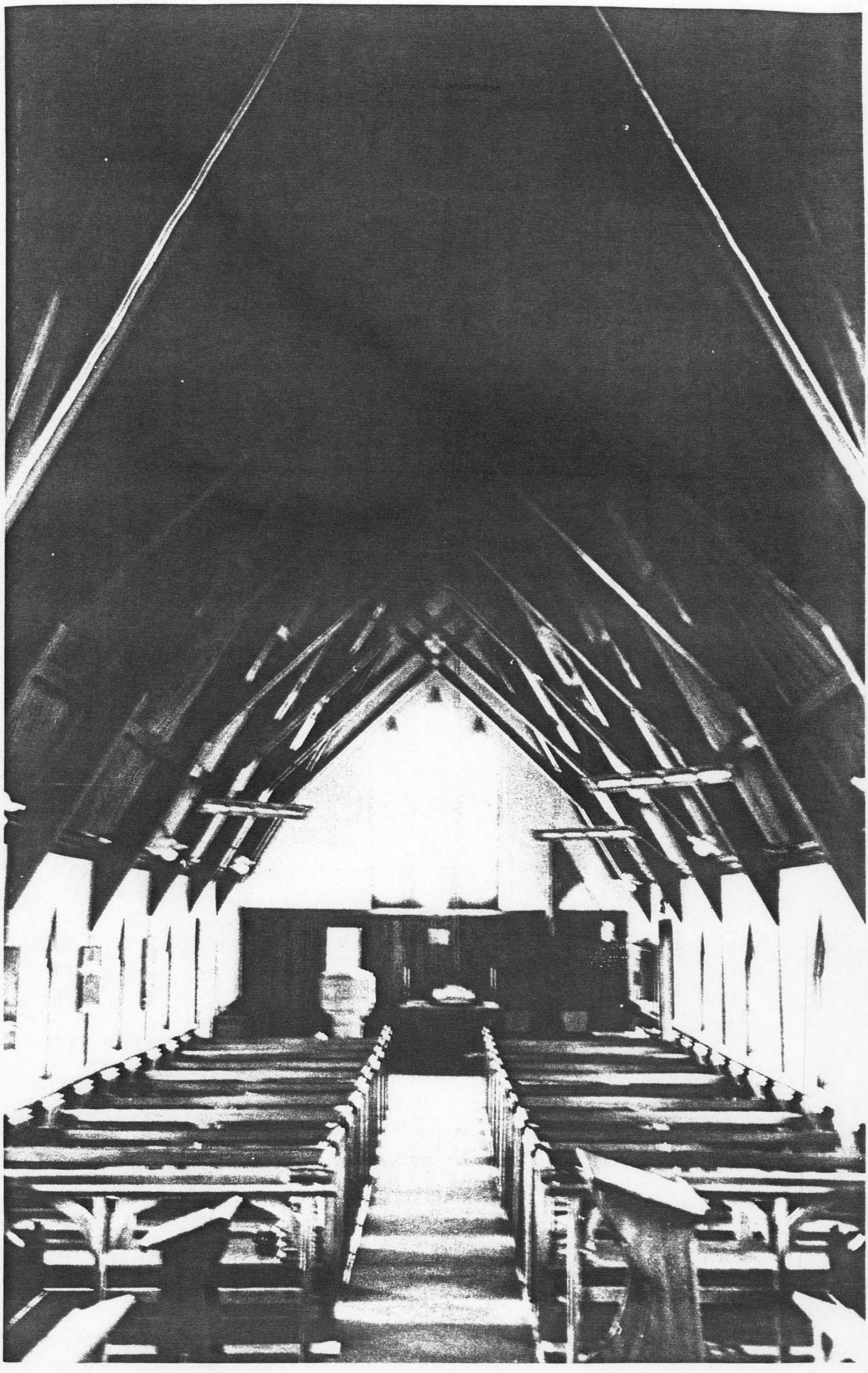
8. Holy Trinity Church, Lyttelton, alternative design, 1852.



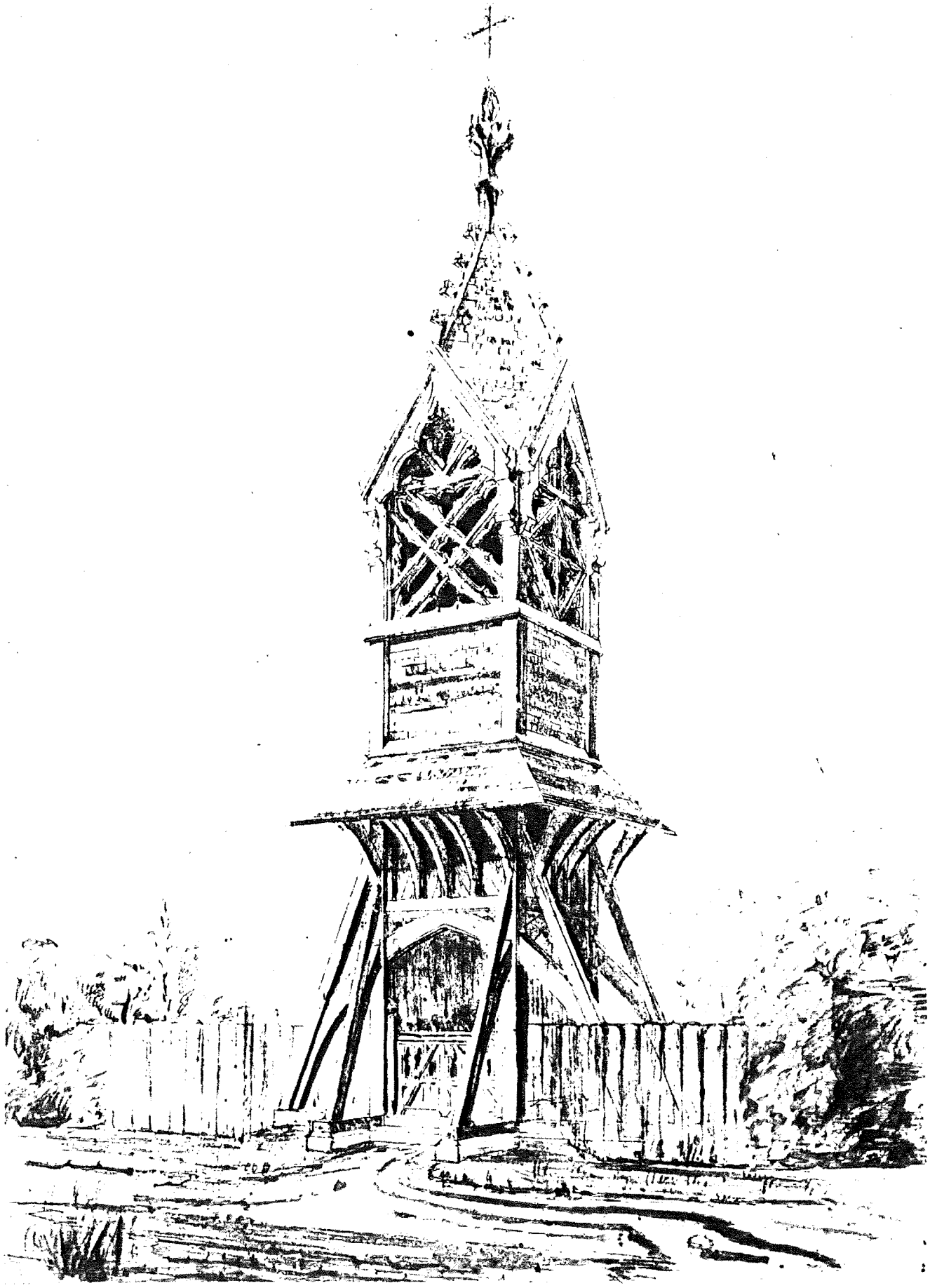
9. St Bartholomew's Church, Kaiapoi, nave, 1855, trancepts and chancel, 1862.



10. St Bartholomew's Church, west end of nave.

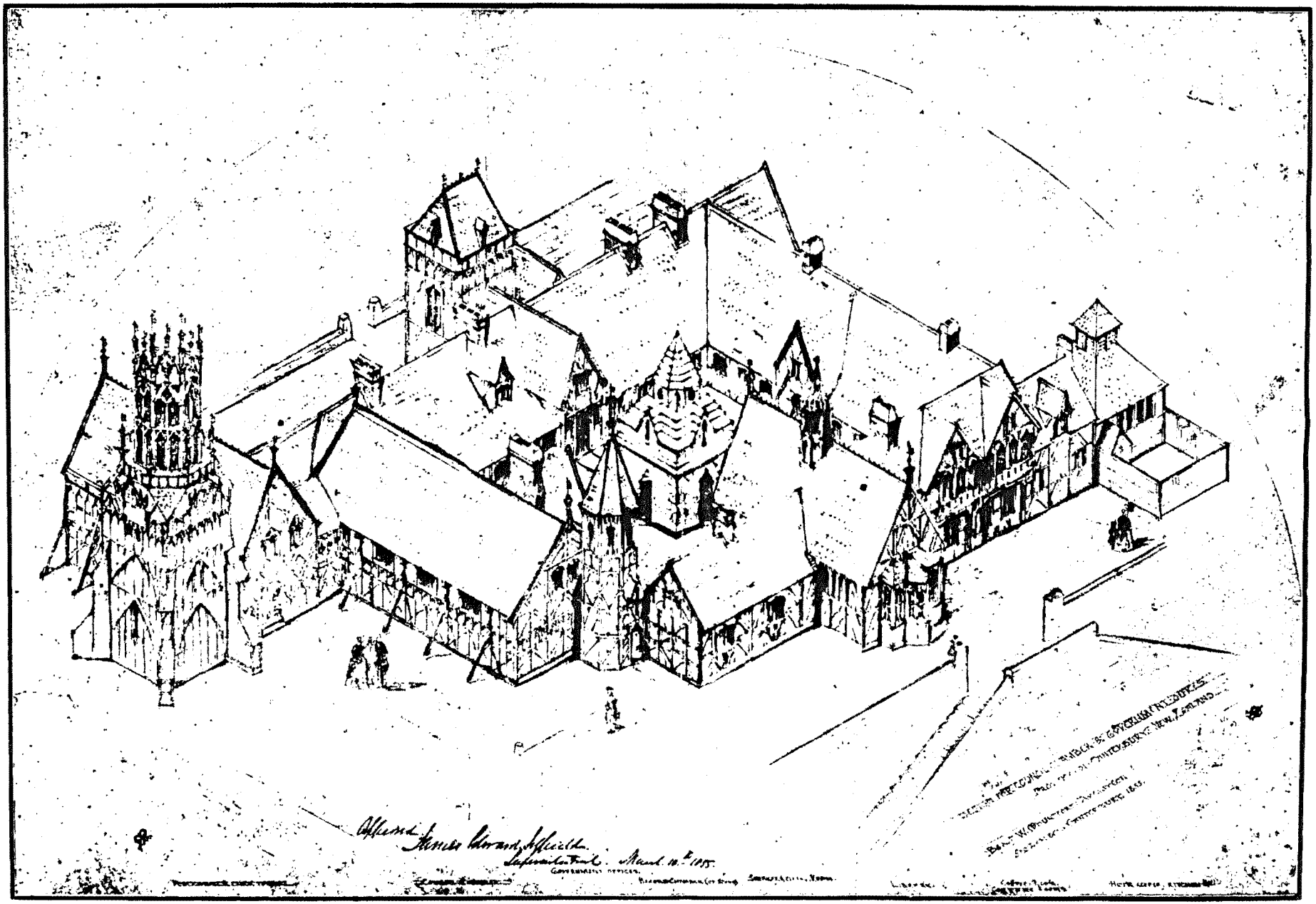


11. St Bartholomew's Church, interior looking west.



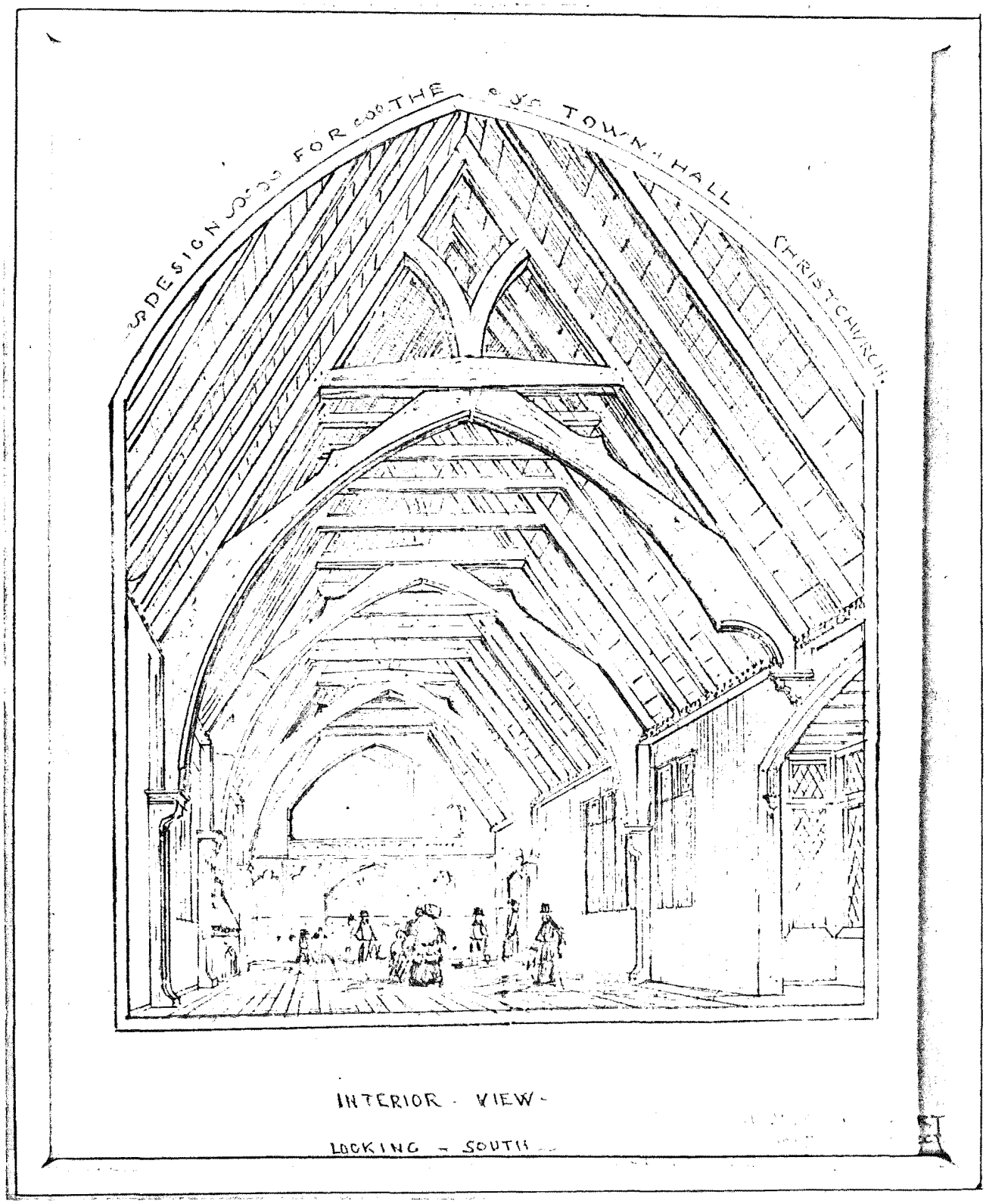
12. St Micheal's Church, Christchurch, bell tower, perspective view, 1861.

13. St Mary's Church, Halswell, north-west view, 1863.

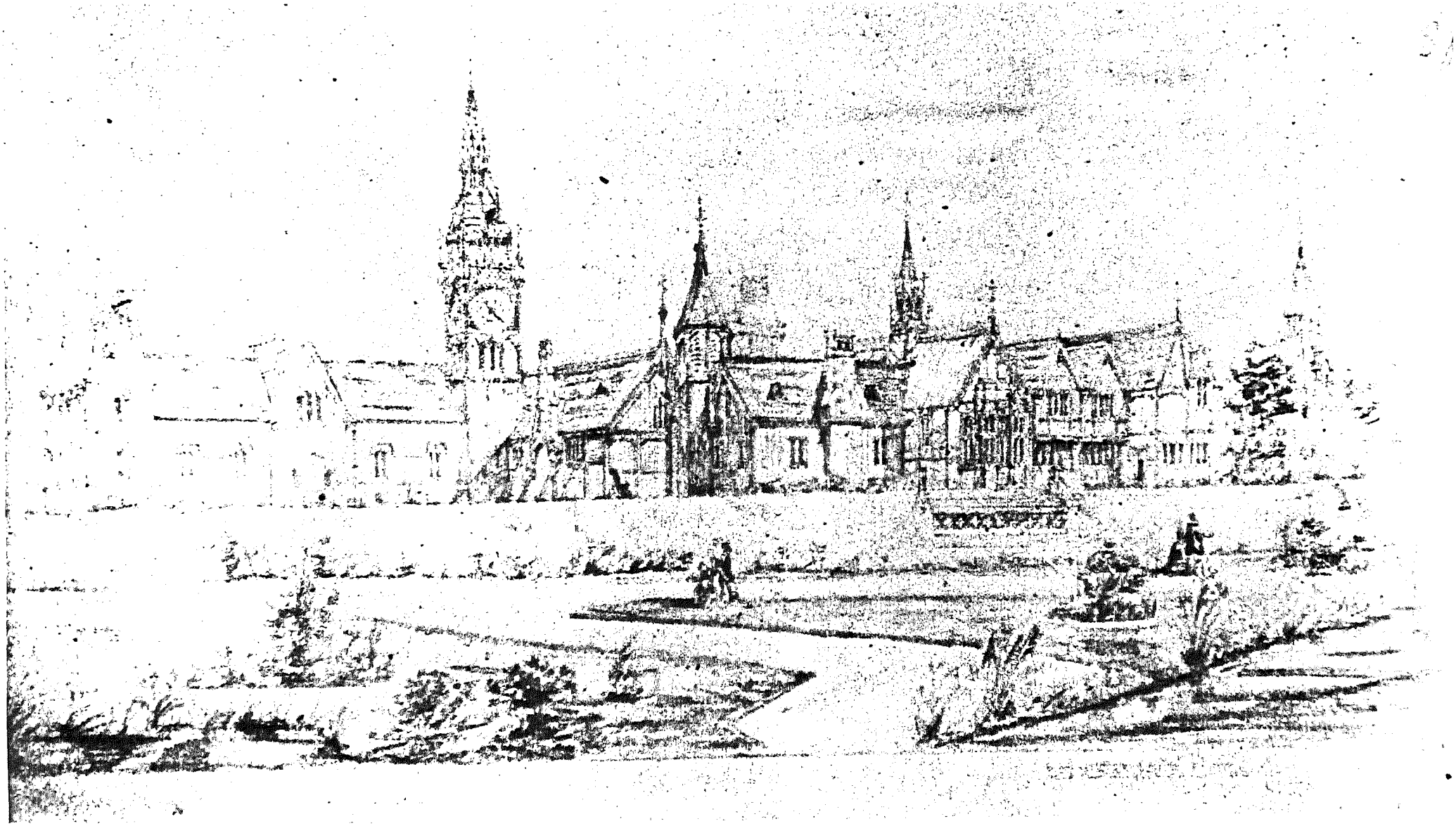


The Original Design for the Provincial Council Buildings. The lock Tower appears at left (south) end.

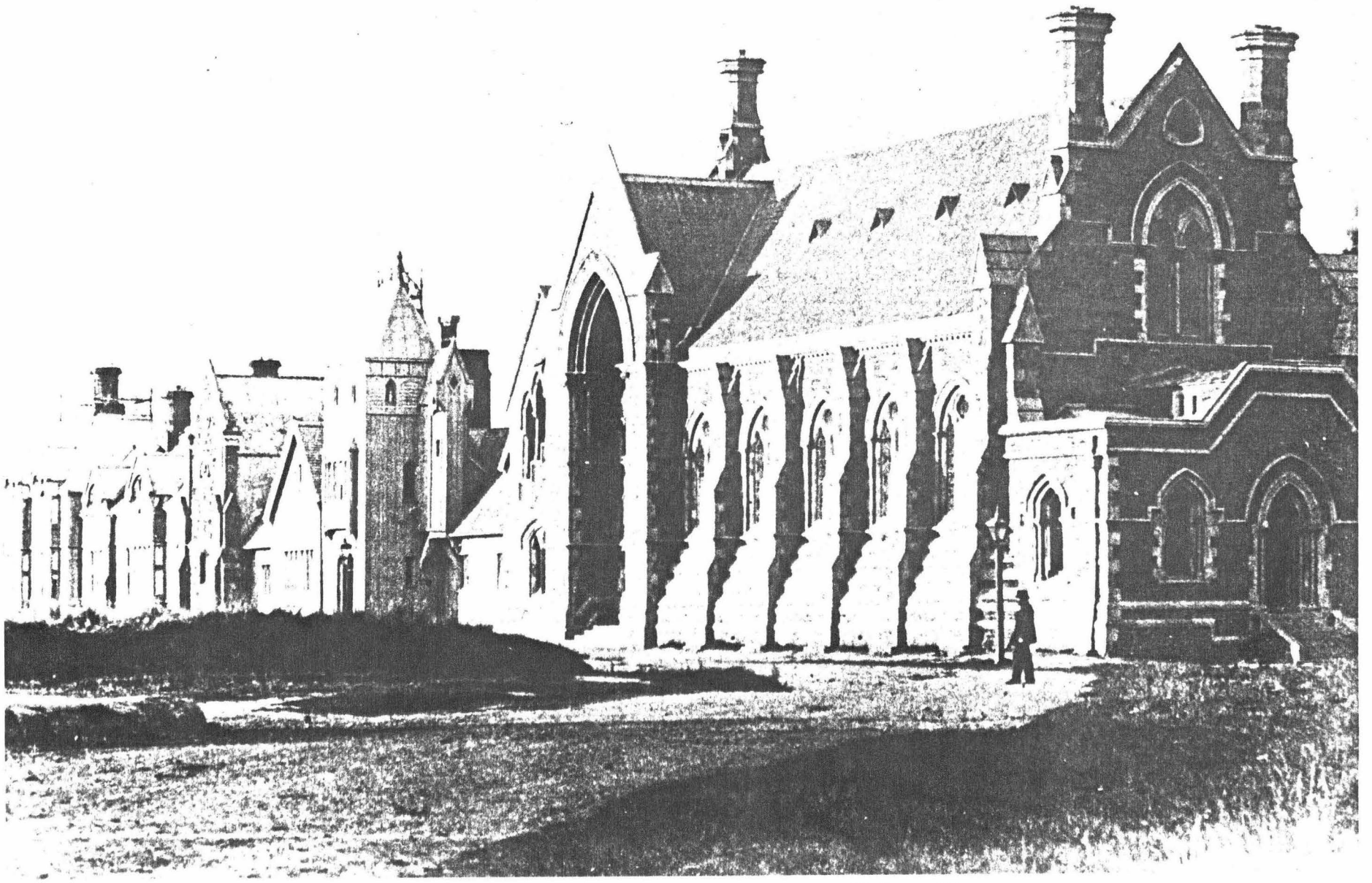
14. Provincial Buildings, Christchurch, perspective drawing, 1855.



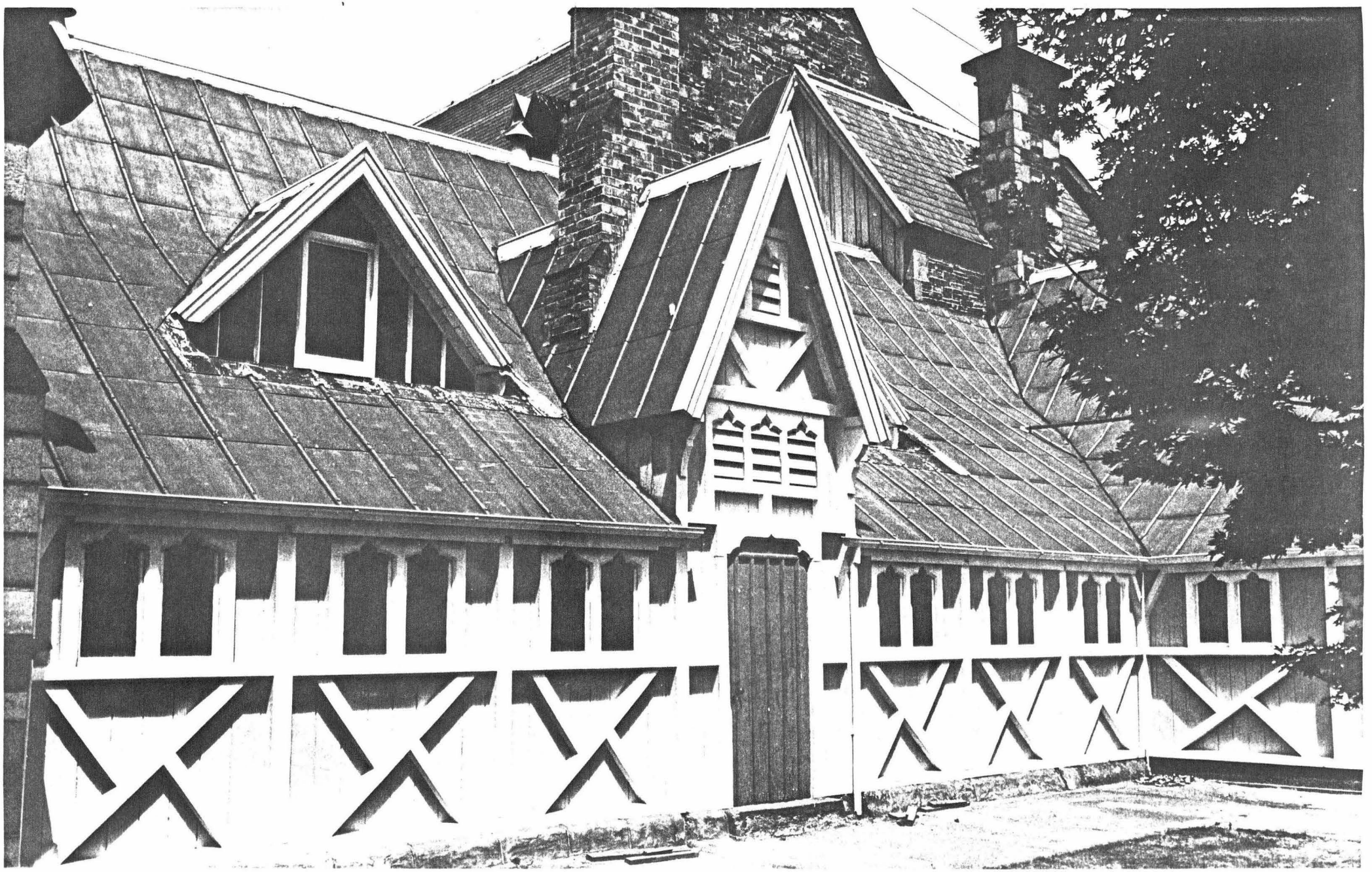
15. Christchurch Town Hall, interior view looking south, 1857.



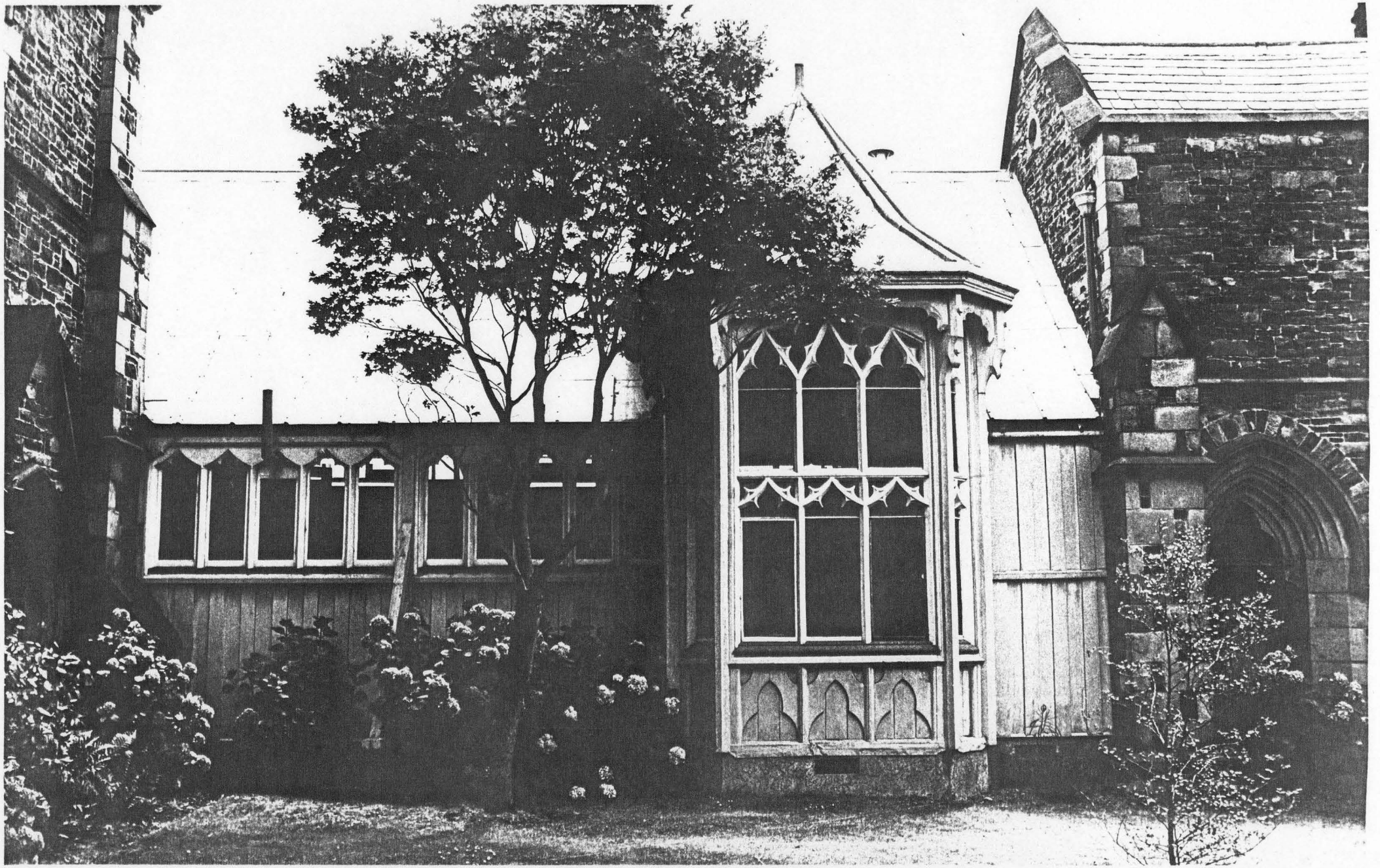
16. Provincial Buildings, perspective drawing, c.1857.



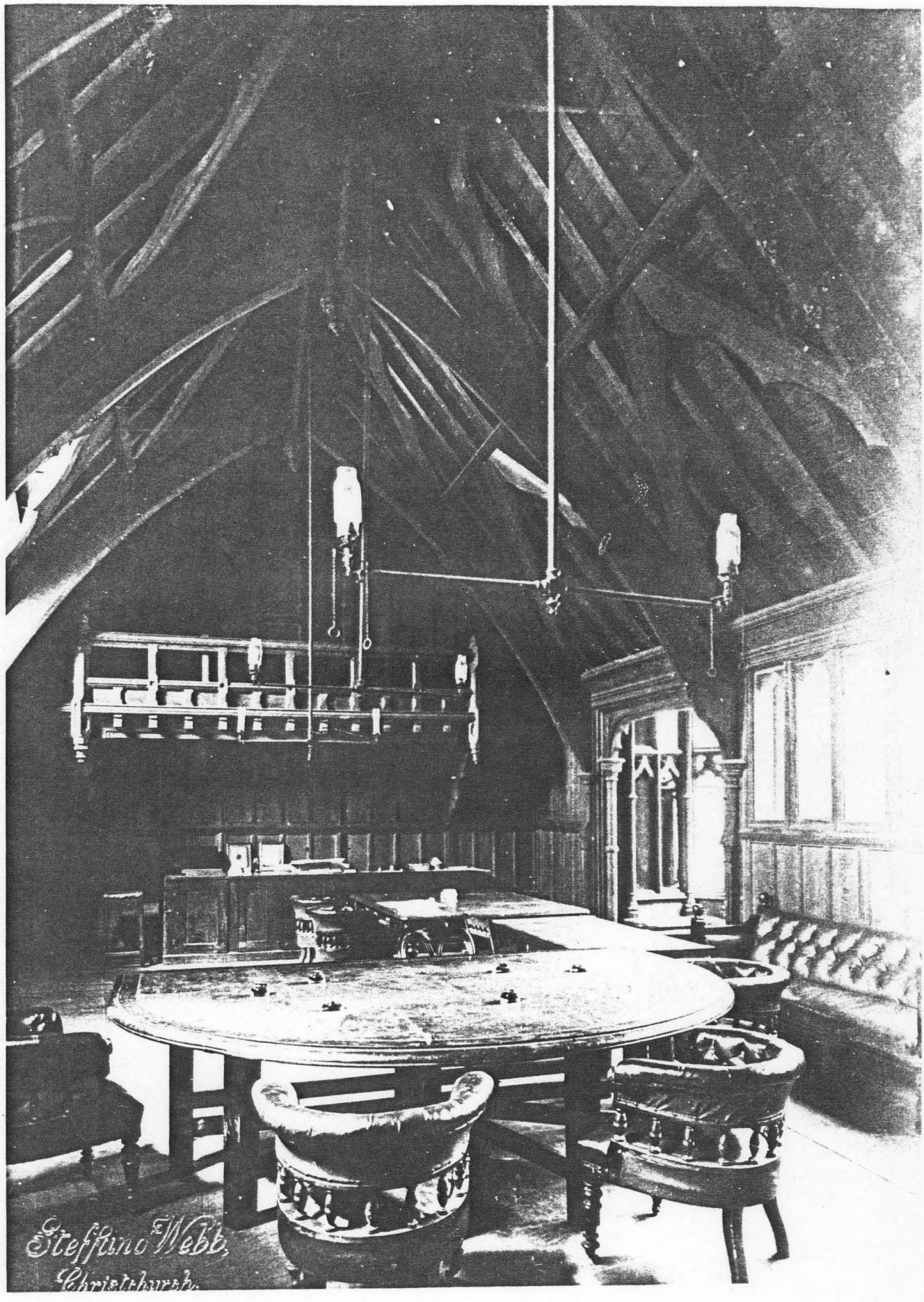
17. Provincial Buildings, south-west view, 1858 - 1865.



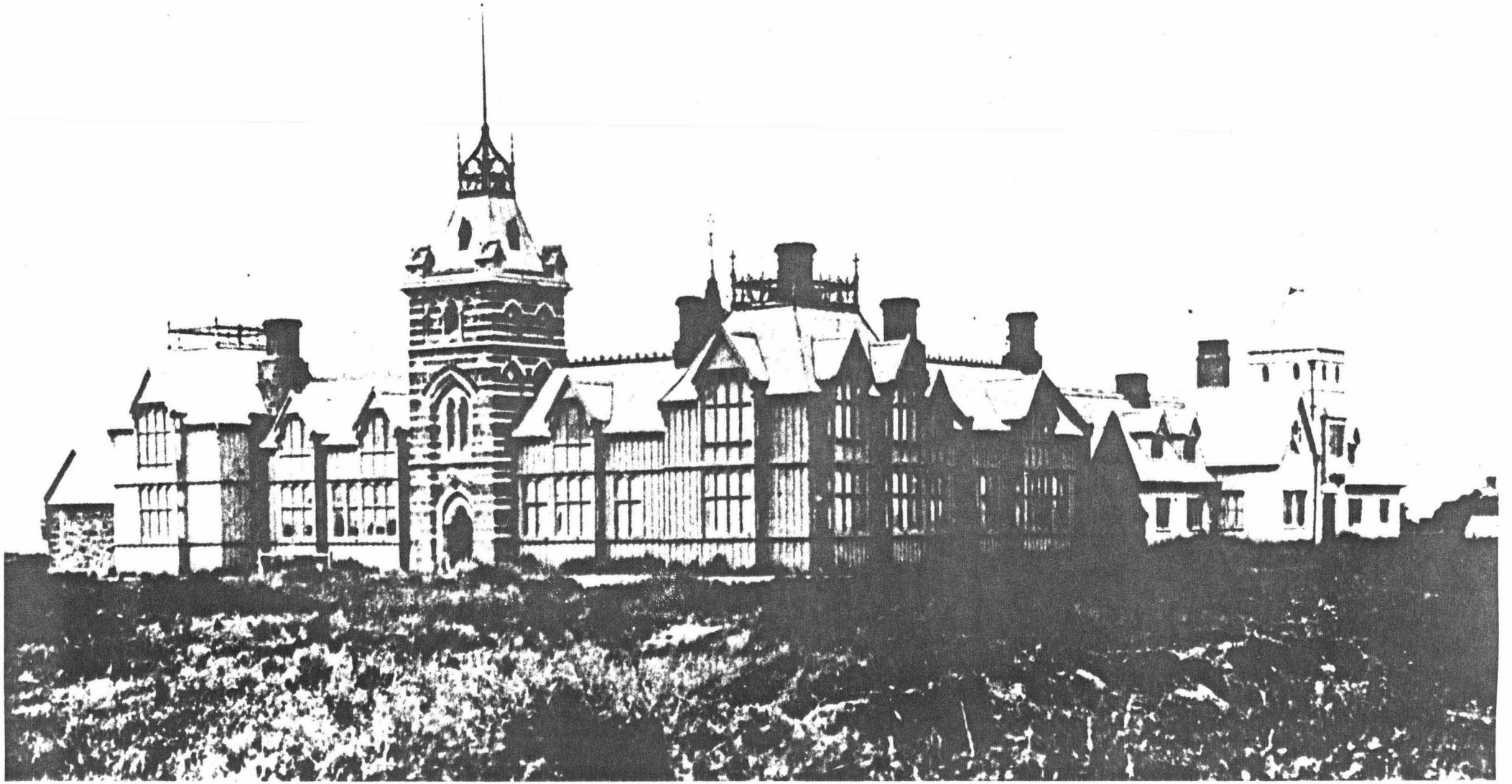
18. Provincial Buildings, wooden council chamber and corridor, from the north, 1858.



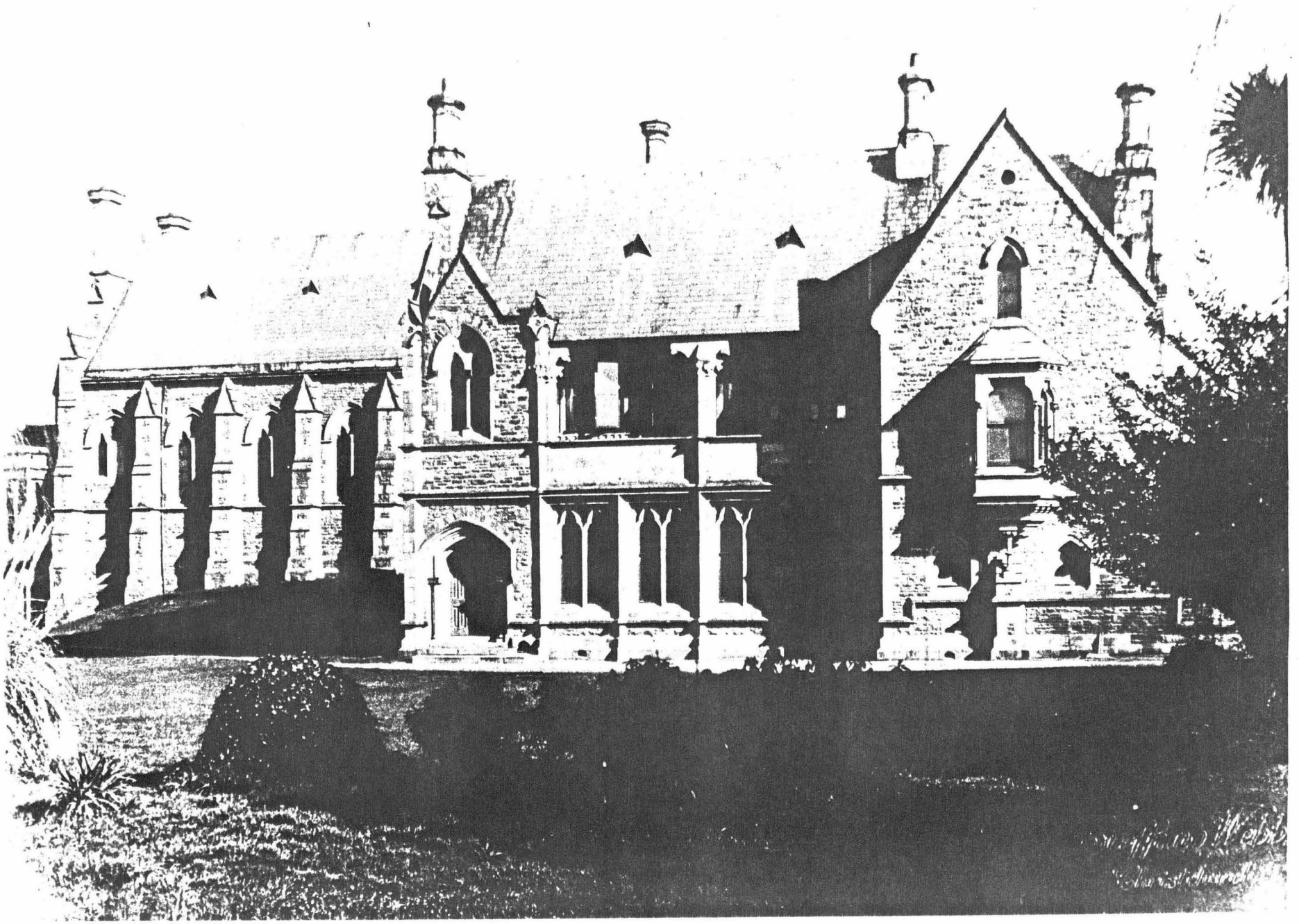
19. Provincial Buildings, wooden council chamber from the south.



20. Provincial Buildings, wooden council chamber, interior, looking east.

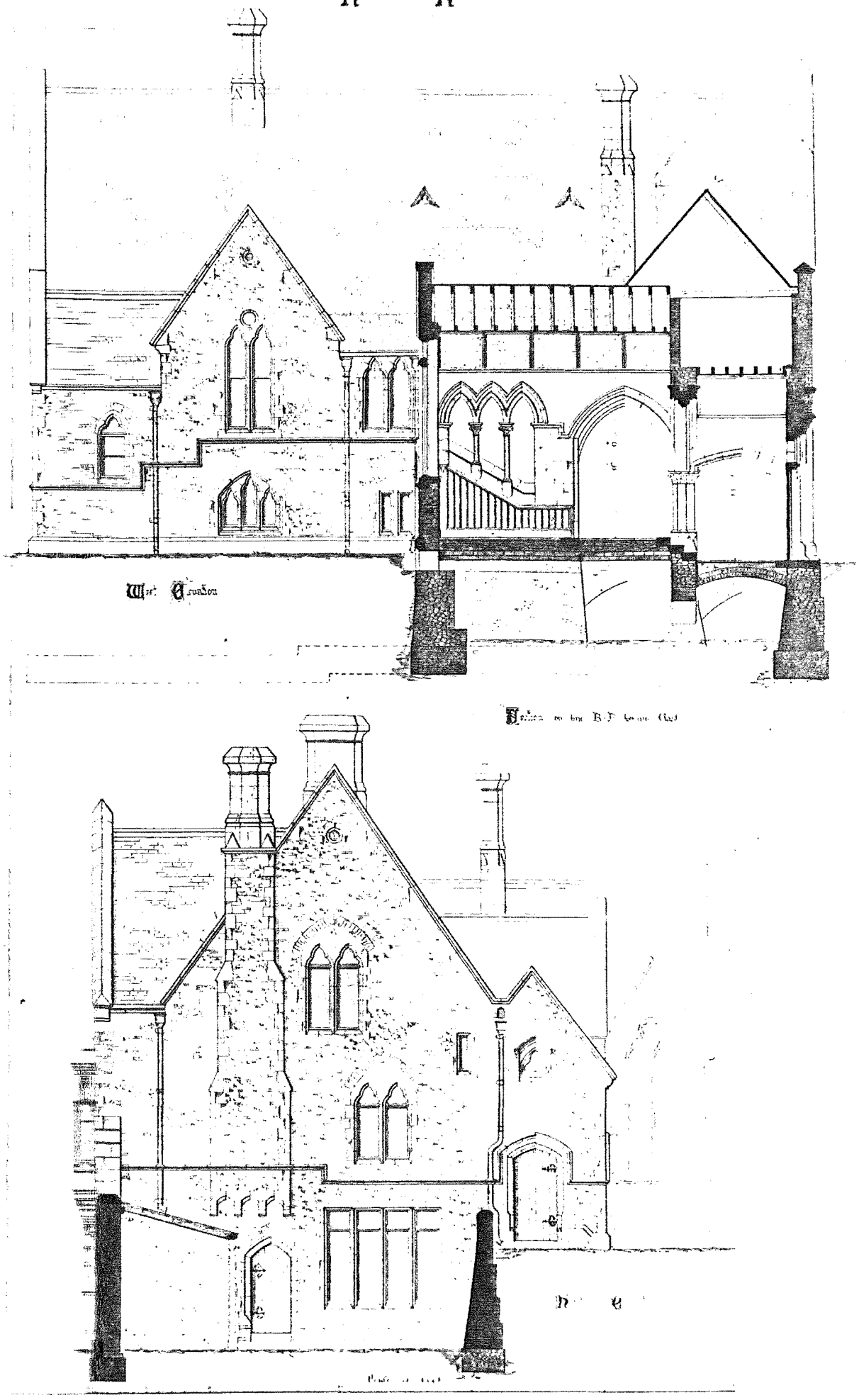


21. Provincial Buildings, north front, 1859.

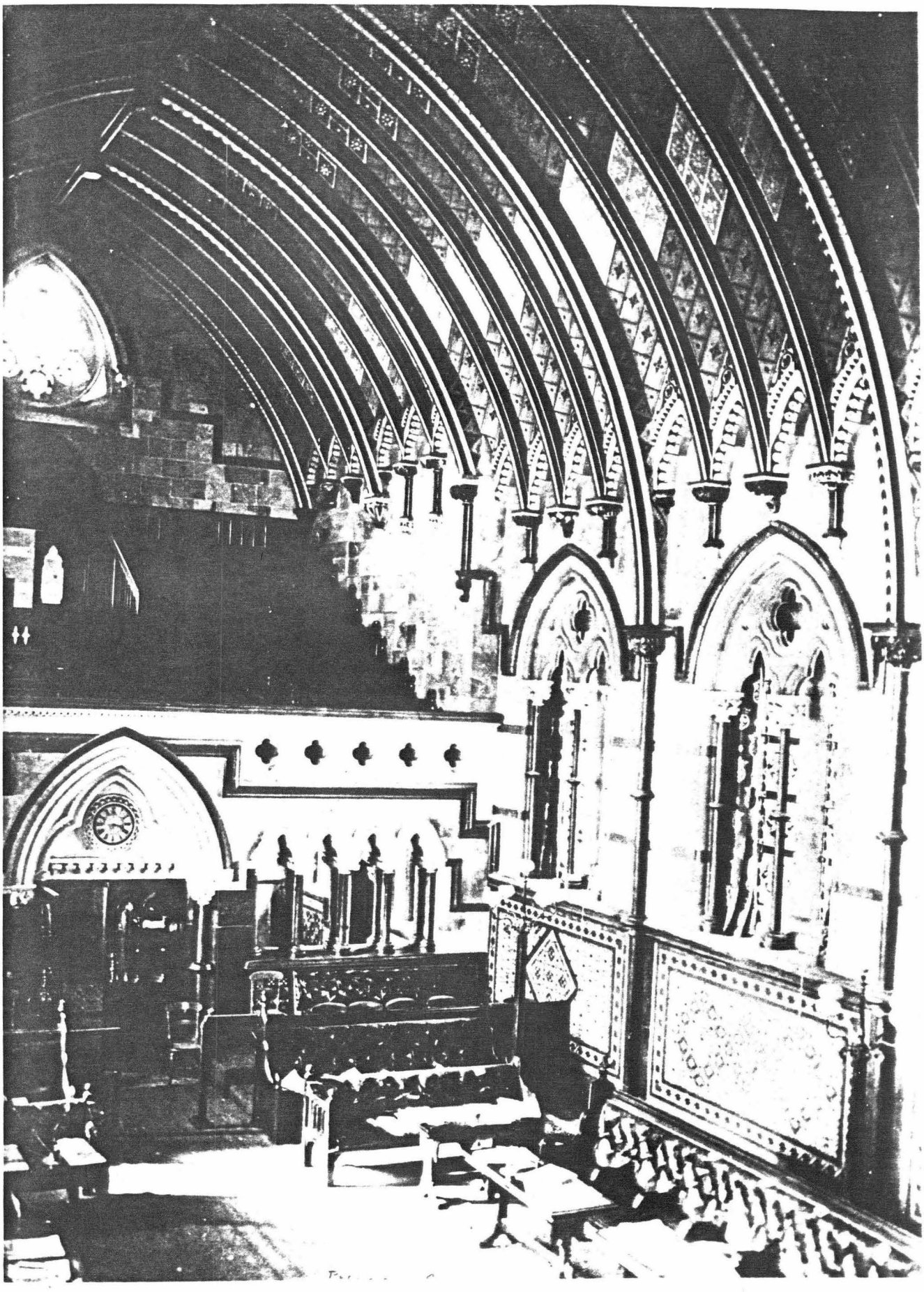


22. Provincial Buildings, council chamber, (left) and refreshment rooms, 1865.

23. Provincial Buildings, refreshment rooms, south elevation.

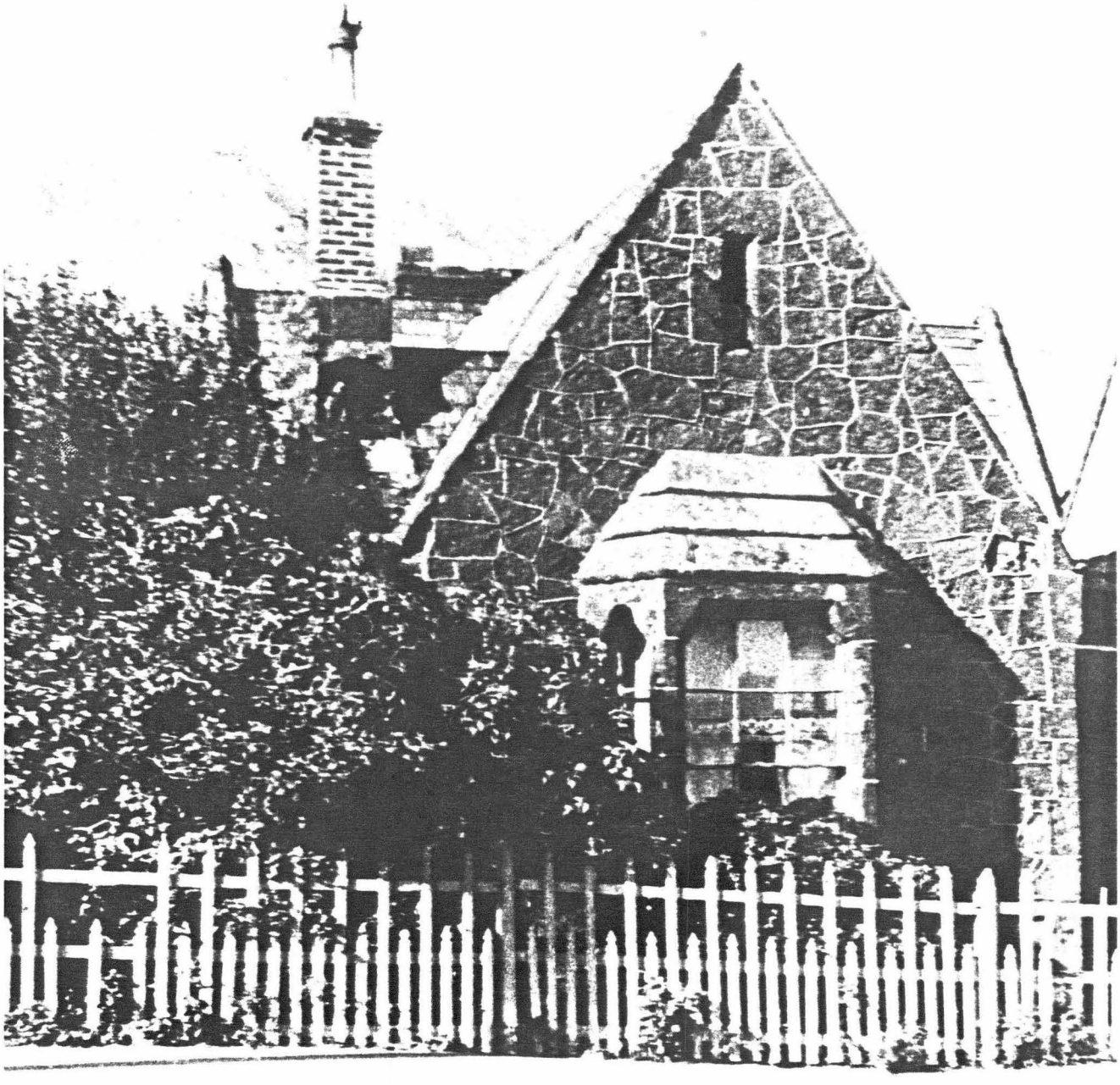


24. Provincial Buildings, refreshment rooms, west and north elevations.

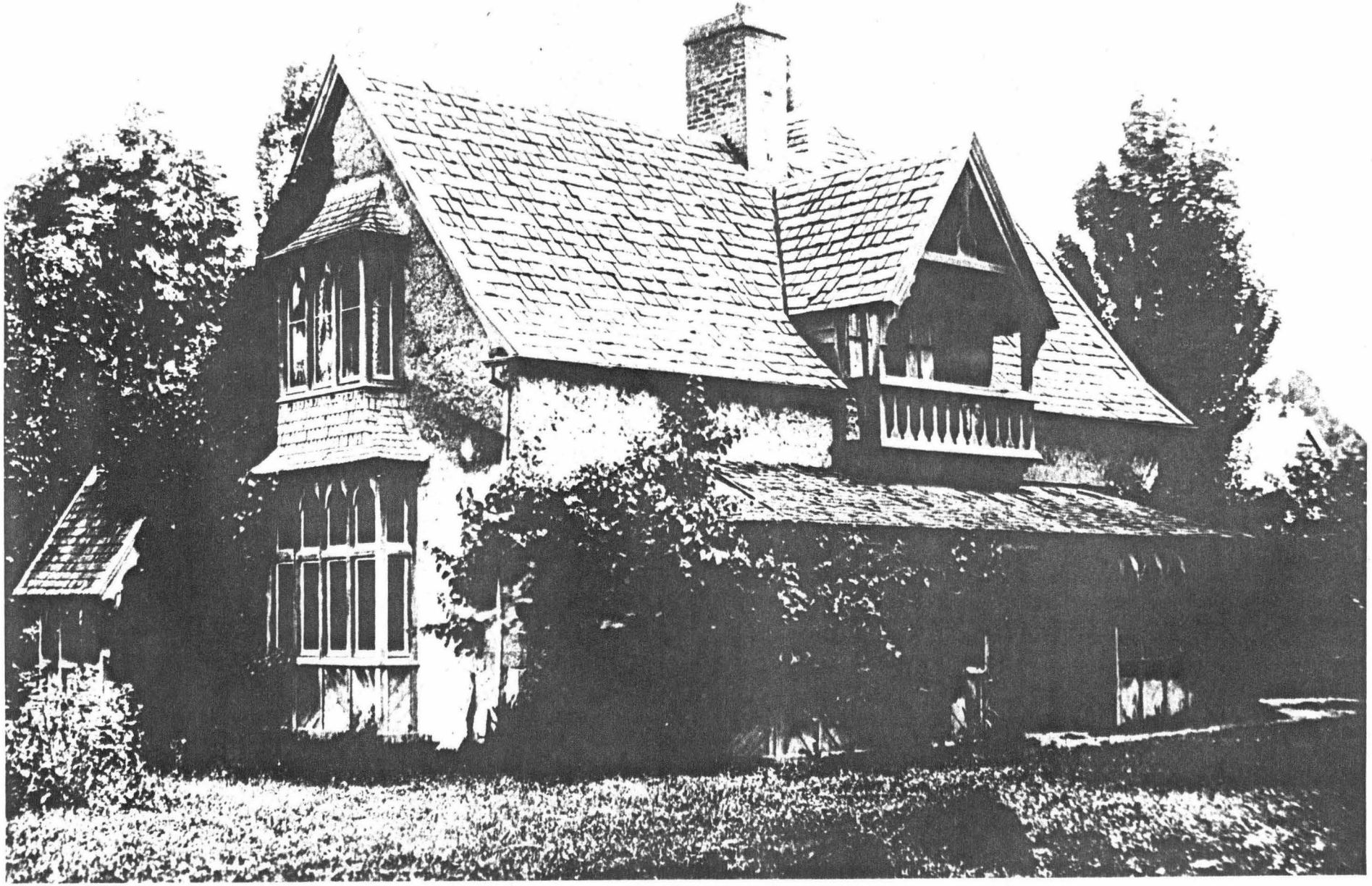


25. Provincial Buildings, stone council chamber, interior, looking north.

...ond design, 1857



29. Union Bank of Australian Lyttelton, east front of manager's residence, c.1857.



33. Benjamin Mountfort house, Christchurch, c.1860.